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# **ARE WE DOING GOOD?**

**Catholic Social Teaching  
and the ethics of public policy outcomes  
in New Zealand**

**A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN PUBLIC POLICY**

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2010**

Dedicated to my father

John Robert Fittes  
1920 – 2005

His calm guidance shaped my ethical perspective  
and sense of fair play  
in the light of our rich spiritual heritage

Requiescat in pace

## **ABSTRACT**

From the perspective that avoidable social and environmental injustices exist in New Zealand, this research examines the ethics of public policy. It suggests that our society would be more justly sustainable if the ethics of policy outcomes were to supersede political expediency as the dominant influence in government's decision-making. An Appreciative Inquiry with expert interviewees is applied to the two-part proposition that: (a) a greater focus on ethics and social morality is required for effective policy-making; and (b) the application of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching would enhance the ethical coherence of government policy, programme and service development.

The research has found that the public policy system in New Zealand enables its workers to 'do well,' but often prevents them from 'doing good,' in policy domains such as housing and employment. Erroneous assumptions by policy actors that their work is morally neutral limit their appreciation of the effects that government decisions have on society and the natural environment. The research suggests that government should insist on ethical analysis of policy proposals and impacts as a pre-requisite for its decisions. Since Catholic Social Teaching is congruent with our accepted standards of social morality, it could helpfully be applied to policy design and implementation in this country. The best way to position CST as a moral signpost for policy-making would be to apply it to specific policies and services.

This project has been oriented from the outset towards applicability in the public policy environment. Accordingly, the research includes three new policy-making frameworks which combine the principles of Catholic Social Teaching with the methodology of Appreciative Inquiry. Use of these analytical frameworks would enable all policy actors to assess the ethics of recommendations and decisions in terms of their impacts on people and the earth.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AI</b>	Appreciative Inquiry
<b>ALMP</b>	Active labour market programme
<b>ARGF</b>	Auckland Regional Growth Forum
<b>AS</b>	Accommodation Supplement
<b>CA</b>	<i>Centesimus Annus</i> (social encyclical 1991)
<b>CAFOD</b>	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
<b>CBEW</b>	Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales
<b>CCJP</b>	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
<b>CELAM</b>	Conference of Latin American Bishops
<b>CIV</b>	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i> (social encyclical 2009)
<b>CPAG</b>	Child Poverty Action Group
<b>CST</b>	Catholic Social Teaching
<b>DCE</b>	<i>Deus Caritas Est</i> (encyclical 2005)
<b>DOL</b>	Department of Labour
<b>EA</b>	<i>Ecclesia in America</i> (apostolic exhortation 1999)
<b>EN</b>	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (apostolic exhortation 1995)
<b>EO</b>	<i>Ecclesia in Oceania</i> (apostolic exhortation 2000)
<b>ES</b>	<i>Ecclesiam Suam</i> (encyclical 1964)
<b>GS</b>	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (pastoral constitution 1965)
<b>HNZC</b>	Housing New Zealand Corporation
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Commission
<b>IM</b>	<i>Iustitia in Mundo</i> (World Synod of Bishops' Statement 1971)
<b>IRD</b>	Inland Revenue Department
<b>IRR</b>	Income-related rents
<b>LE</b>	<i>Laborem Exercens</i> (social encyclical 1981)
<b>MM</b>	<i>Mater et Magistra</i> (social encyclical 1961)
<b>MSD</b>	Ministry of Social Development
<b>MUHEC</b>	Massey University Human Ethics Committee

<b>NAIRU</b>	Non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organisation
<b>NPM</b>	New public management
<b>NZCCB</b>	New Zealand Conference of Catholic Bishops
<b>NZCCSS</b>	New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services
<b>NZCEO</b>	New Zealand Catholic Education Office
<b>OA</b>	<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> (apostolic letter 1971)
<b>PCE</b>	Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
<b>PCJP</b>	Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
<b>PMTFE</b>	Prime Ministerial Task Force for Employment
<b>PP</b>	<i>Populorum Progressio</i> (social encyclical 1967)
<b>PSCIA</b>	Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975
<b>PT</b>	<i>Pacem in Terris</i> (social encyclical 1963)
<b>QA</b>	<i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> (social encyclical 1931)
<b>RMA</b>	Resource Management Act 1991
<b>RN</b>	<i>Rerum Novarum</i> (social encyclical 1891)
<b>SANZ</b>	Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand (Inc)
<b>SAS</b>	Social Allocation System
<b>SCCE</b>	Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education
<b>SRS</b>	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> (social encyclical 1987)
<b>SS</b>	<i>Spe Salvi</i> (encyclical 2007)
<b>SSC</b>	State Services Commission
<b>TOP</b>	Training Opportunities Programme
<b>TPK</b>	Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Maori Development
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCED</b>	UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992)
<b>USCCB</b>	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
<b>WCED</b>	World Commission on Environment and Development

## **Part One**

### **Exploring: ethical principles and theories**

Step briefly out of your familiar world. Contemplate the diverse activity in a typically busy city street and speculate on the experiences of justice in the lives of those hurrying by. Can they all take for granted access to decent housing, stable employment and sufficient income to support their families in a healthy living environment? Are they all equipped for effective social participation and contribution? Do they see around them evidence of respect for the natural world on which their existence depends? Are their children learning in an environment that imbues them with self-confidence and hope for the future? Do they appear confident that government, through its agencies, exercises its power in the interests of those who elected it?

Pause to reflect on whether such hopes and expectations are realistic for all New Zealanders and on the normative contribution of government in their realisation. Social research evidence, and perhaps your own observation, suggests that some New Zealanders are missing out on these things. At best, therefore, you might give only a partial affirmation to the questions posed above. Have you ever wondered why this might be so?

Why do achievement disparities exist in New Zealand, a relatively wealthy, under-populated country? Do some people continually make poor personal choices, affecting their well-being and prospects? Are there barriers to achievement which affect some groups disproportionately? Why should this matter? No one is preventing you from succeeding on your own terms, are they? Why should anyone else be hindered from achieving their potential? Yet some people and groups are disadvantaged. Their experiences suggest the existence of social injustice and environmental injustice in New Zealand. In popular parlance, 'That is not OK.'

Policy choices represent attempts to ‘do good’ and ‘do better’ with regard to societal and environmental problems. Such choices are framed by normative ethics, derived in turn from universal moral values. These values are encapsulated in this research as ‘social morality’ or a ‘moral compass.’ These terms are used by many of the participants in this research. Adoption of such values and expressions implies repudiation of moral relativism. In our pluralist society, the challenges for policy (and for this research) are to name the values that express the core of our humanity and to find consensus as to their application in diverse communities and policy domains.

Successive Popes have taught that economic (and public policy) decisions have moral consequences. In exploring socio-economic disadvantage, this research considers social ethics and morality interchangeably, despite a policy-making convention that ethics concerns process integrity, while morality entails personal values which are not the concern of public policy. As this project has matured, I have formed the view that such a distinction is artificial, politically expedient and systemically evasive. Policy content and outcomes have moral and ethical significance, at least to the same extent that organisational behaviour has.

Policy content is shaped by moral principles, whether articulated or merely assumed. ‘Ethics’ is a less normatively loaded term than ‘morality’ and this may account for its comparative acceptability in policy circles. It also accounts for its use in the subtitle of this project. Yet the language of ethics is seldom heard in policy-making. It is a language of morality, and this disturbs relativistic assumptions of ethical neutrality. In this research, Catholic Social Teaching is examined as a set of moral principles with the potential to help us grapple with the complexity of policy ethics.

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction to this research**

In the course of a thirty-year public service career spanning the domains of housing, education, race relations, careers advice and employment, I have seen abrasiveness, competitiveness and lack of altruistic concern in social interactions among government agencies, interest groups and individuals. I have often observed the use of power to endorse politically expedient causes and I have seen injustice entrenched by policy and governance paradigms.

### **1.1 The orientation and purpose of the research**

This research is about the role of public policy in achieving the best possible social and environmental outcomes for New Zealand. To move our nation in this direction, it proposes an all-encompassing policy outcome – just sustainability – which links social and environmental justice with ecological sustainability (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003; Agyeman and Evans 2004). It is energised by my hope that, as a community, we have aspirations for justice, along with the capacity to achieve it. To combine justice with sustainability, we need to ask the right questions, of the right people, in the right places, and then take the right actions.

It is possible to pose penetrating questions to generate energy for change while avoiding deficit thinking and assignment of blame. An organisation development paradigm for this, known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI), was introduced by Cooperrider and Srivastva in 1986. With its departure from a problem-solving approach to the generation of new possibilities, AI is used to support organisational change in diverse settings. This research has been framed as an AI. Its participants were asked to identify strengths in the

public policy system that could be built upon to increase the likelihood of justly sustainable policy outcomes.

Most importantly, the research focuses on the ethics and morality of current policy outcomes. In search of a feasible framework for social morality, I have examined an ancient moral tradition which adopts a guidance role in social, economic, environmental and political discourse. The research has asked whether the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) could be integrated with public policy development, to assist the evolution of a more equitable, responsible, altruistic and cohesive society in which all can achieve their highest potential. CST is not analysed or presented as the only valid approach to social morality in policy-making, but as a tradition which addresses ethical dilemmas in society and government and offers principles to guide morally informed responses to these dilemmas.

## **1.2 What is Catholic Social Teaching?**

A useful working definition of CST is provided by Smithies in Boston and Cameron's exposition of church/state relationships and the ability of the former to promote social justice:

CST ... deals with the nature of moral behaviour in the social, political and economic order. It is the application of Catholic moral theology to the ethical questions raised by human societies, institutions and structures (Smithies 1994:148).

CST is based on a set of principles to assist governments, organisations and communities make moral decisions which maintain individual human dignity within the framework of the common good. The Jesuit theologian,



Massaro (1998:4), describes it as: ‘A modest blend of moral exhortation and social analysis, highlighting central principles and ethical values for life in complex, modern societies.’ Another theologian, Weigel (2001:155), clarifies the role envisaged by the Church in offering such guidance: ‘The Church is not in the business of designing or running governments [but in] ... forming the kind of people who can design and run governments in which freedom leads to genuine human flourishing.’

The Catholic Social Teaching principles comprise an integrated approach to social morality. While the principles overlap each other, each one adds distinctive yet complementary perspectives to human dignity as the starting point for moral principles and ethical behaviours. CST does not follow any political ideology, but because of its subject-matter concerning the political economy, it is often interpreted in terms of left-wing and right-wing political positions. This may be inevitable, but, as I explain later, does not do justice to the essence or purpose of CST itself. This teaching aims to orient political and economic decision-making to its conception of the common good (as outlined in Chapter 3). Complexity in this research arises from the application (as addressed in Chapter 19) of the CST framework for social morality to our politicised policy environment (Brumley 2006:8).

I have grouped the CST principles as follows, in the first place according to their relevance to society and the natural environment as sites where injustices occur, and secondly to the economic and political sites where solutions to injustices might be found:

CST principles pertaining to social and environmental sites of need

- Human dignity and authentic development
- The family as the foundation of society
- The common good and solidarity
- Freedom, rights and reciprocal responsibilities

- Social justice and equity
- The preferential option for the poor
- Respect for cultural autonomy and diversity; and
- Stewardship of creation and sustainability

### CST principles for justly sustainable economic and political solutions

- Economic justice
- The universal destination of public and private goods
- The dignity of work, fair wages and workers' rights
- Subsidiarity and the role of government
- Effective civil and political participation; and
- Global and local development and peace

This grouping of the principles underpins the theoretical exposition of CST itself and, later in this thesis, informs a set of interrogative frameworks proposed for ethical policy-making.

### **1.3 Significant assumptions for this research**

This study has been predicated on several assumptions about the New Zealand public policy system and the current profile of Catholic Social Teaching relative to it. These assumptions are:

- Low-level awareness of ethics in general (Ahdar 2001:85-6) and of Catholic Social Teaching in particular, in policy development and decision-making
- The tension between (a) people's primary attraction to policy positions and resourcing decisions congruent with their own interests, and (b) what might be decided upon using an altruistic perspective (Considine 1994:108-9, 119-20)
- The use of political, organisational and economic power to maximise the interests and utility of those who hold it (Lipsky 1980:506-7; Niskanen 1998:378-81)

- The presence of deficiencies in current policy-making processes which directly or indirectly result in socio-economic disadvantage and risks to the environment – risks which could be mitigated by consciously ethical approaches
- The potential for the use of the CST principles to enhance social justice and environmental sustainability through ethics-based rather than politically expedient policy approaches; and
- A sense that there is scope at the interface of CST and public policy to influence the value base on which the latter is developed.

CST suggests that all public policy should be judged by its effects on human dignity and the common good (USCCB 1986). Yet one might ask – Why use CST for this research, among the diversity of political philosophies, moral theologies and value systems available in our pluralist society? Is it feasible to expect that the CST principles would inform the ethical decisions of those who do not subscribe to Catholicism? While CST was formalised in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), it originates from older sources, especially the *Bible*, which influenced the development of Western society. This suggests its continuing relevance as a social morality framework at the heart of our shared understandings of right and wrong.

CST does not hold a monopoly on social and environmental justice principles, but it has evolved through the papal Magisterium into a coherent and accessible moral tradition. It is reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (Maritain 1950a, 1966) and informs the underlying values of capitalist democracies such as New Zealand. Indeed, the concerns of Catholic Social Teaching are the concerns of secular social policy.

#### **1.4 The central research questions**

The titular research question ‘Are we doing good?’ makes a normative connection in this project between moral/ ethical principles and public

policy assumptions. To ground this connection, this study has proposed ‘just sustainability’ as a generic and all-embracing policy outcome, attainable if the secular implications of CST were to be fully realised. Momentum for the research evolved over many years, from my observations of differentiated adverse policy impacts in society, to my reflections on their causes and what might be done to remedy them. Such thoughts generated the following questions which have driven this project:

- In relatively wealthy New Zealand, why are some people homeless and some people unemployed?
- Is individual and family choice the sole determinant of personal outcomes? Are there systemic policy factors that influence, even compromise, the ability of some people to succeed on their own terms?
- With evidence around us of socio-economic and achievement disparities, can we claim to be ‘doing good’ in public policy-making and social service delivery?
- Could we do better? Should we? Would we, if we had widespread consensus on the ethical frameworks to do so?

These questions stimulated others, all of which contributed to the evolution of a research proposition to be explored with expert interviewees:

- Could public policy based on an explicit ethical foundation firstly alleviate and gradually remove poverty, structural unemployment, poor housing and homelessness from New Zealand communities?
- What could the principles of CST contribute to the development of an ethical foundation for policy-making? How might this be achieved in today’s society?
- Would a comprehensive ethic of ‘just sustainability’ serve as a secular parallel to the principles of CST, to facilitate systemic links between the CST ethic and the public policy paradigm?

These questions coalesce throughout the research, to address a two-part research proposition:

- (a) that the public policy system needs an increased ethical focus on its outcomes to foster just sustainability; and
- (b) that the application of the principles of CST could contribute to an ethics-based analytical framework for policy development.

## **1.5 The scope and structure of the research**

The above research questions elicited a set of critical domains for this inquiry. From the perspective of social morality, these were the papal Magisterium and principles of CST; Bishops' Pastoral Statements; the relationship between church and state; the Catholic education system; and CST advocacy by key proponents, such as Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. From the public policy standpoint, the domains included definitions and manifestations of social justice and injustice; the environmental justice imperative; the concept of just sustainability; the New Zealand public policy system; and examples within housing policy and employment policy. With regard to research methodology, the foundations for AI were canvassed, and its application within the Catholic Church itself was explored.

The research was designed in three parts. Part One explores principles, theories and commentaries for each domain itemised above. In addition to the introductory chapter, it comprises Chapters 2-8. Chapter 2 covers the discourse on just sustainability, examining its components of social and environmental justice. Chapter 3 considers those principles of CST which relate to social and environmental sites where injustice is located.

Chapter 4 explores the CST principles which concern the political economy – in the sites and systems where remedies to injustice may be found. Chapter 5 examines the relationship between the church and the government

in New Zealand, while Chapter 6 analyses key elements of the public policy system, related to governance, decision-making and social service delivery. Chapter 7 considers housing and employment policy content, and Chapter 8 provides an interim synthesis to link all the theoretical domains.

Part Two moves from theory to grounded practice – for CST and for public policy separately at this stage. Also comprising eight chapters, it canvasses research methods and fieldwork findings. Chapters 9 and 10 are concerned with methodology, research ethics and project design. An outline of AI and its relevance to this research project is provided.

Chapter 11 is the first of six chapters which detail the field research findings. The findings are organised within the first two of five AI categories, namely ‘discover,’ and ‘dream.’ Chapter 12 provides the findings under the remaining three AI rubrics ‘design,’ ‘destiny,’ and ‘delivery.’ Chapter 13 captures research responses in terms of social morality and Chapter 14 does the same for just sustainability. Chapter 15 elicits participants’ views on policy-making realities and potential improvements, firstly for housing policy, and then for employment policy. Chapter 16 provides interview findings related to governance, policy implementation and public service coherence and responsiveness.

With theory and practice thus traversed, the integration task begins. In four chapters, Part Three addresses the research implications, through queries which recall the original question: ‘Are we doing good?’ At this point the AI considers: ‘So what?’ as findings are interpreted. Connections between CST and the policy system are made, to identify: ‘What is possible?’ ‘What is needed?’ Applications of the fieldwork data and emergent knowledge postulate: ‘What is best?’ and ‘How can the best be achieved?’

Chapter 17 interprets the research findings and evaluates insights provided by the interviewees. Chapter 18 synthesises theory and practice, connecting participants' critique and new research insights to the principles of CST. Chapter 19 offers three new analytical frameworks, each applicable at a key stage in the policy-making process. These frameworks are all based on CST and AI. They are designed to foster justly sustainable outcomes. Chapter 20 provides strategic reflection and conclusions based on the research findings.

## **1.6 Research outcomes and significance**

I hope that a number of strategic outcomes from this research will become apparent in time. These outcomes comprise an increased awareness of the importance of ethics-based analysis at the start of, and throughout, policy-making; systemic acceptance of just sustainability as the goal of policy-making and service delivery; open-mindedness on the part of policy actors to the use of CST as a moral compass to guide policy assumptions; and willingness to use the policy development frameworks proposed as output from this study. The research identifies some new forms of engagement in public policy, to enhance its impacts on people and on the natural world.

In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) Pope John Paul II wrote about an ethical link between social justice, environmental justice and sustainability. This Papal insight resonates with the secular concept of just sustainability which was mentioned above and will be elaborated on shortly. Worldwide, it seems there is increasing recognition that social justice is meaningless without environmental justice, and vice versa.

This research provides a pathway for exploring, in CST, an alternative concept of what it means for all of us to develop ourselves and our communities authentically and to live in harmony with the rest of creation.

It examines ethical fundamentals for sustaining vibrant and cohesive communities, including government processes that, in focusing on the common good, support people's aspirations justly. Towards the end of the research period, in a new social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI (2009:45) expressed this aspiration as 'people-centred ethics.' This document, following an 18-year hiatus in magisterial CST, has refreshed and re-ignited debate on the applicability of CST to the social morality of the twenty-first century.

In his *Address at the Inaugural Mass* (2005a) Pope Benedict XVI spoke compellingly of: 'The desert of poverty, the desert of hunger and thirst ...' He commented that: 'The external deserts of the world are growing because the internal deserts have become so vast. The Earth's treasures ... have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction.' In his *World Day of Peace Message* (2008a) the Pope asked us all to nurture: 'The human family which dwells in that common house which is the Earth.' He consolidated this hope in *Caritas in Veritate* (CIV 2009:8)<sup>i</sup>, seeking moral action based on 'the ardour of charity and the wisdom of truth.'

In New Zealand, many policy outcomes suggest a different prevailing ethic from that endorsed by Pope Benedict and his predecessors. We can do better, especially where marginalised and vulnerable people are concerned. The hope of doing so encapsulates the significance of this research. It is relevant to politicians, public servants and social commentators. Hopefully it affirms the work of Catholic leaders, advocates, pastoral workers, educators and social service providers, who 'do' Catholic Social Teaching for the good of our community.

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<sup>i</sup> CST has its own referencing convention, comprising the Latin initials of the Magisterial document and the relevant paragraph number. I have combined this with the Harvard system used throughout this thesis, to include the year of publication, for example *QA* 1931: 4 to refer to paragraph 4 of Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Social and environmental justice: towards just sustainability**

Imagine a small, green, fertile country where everyone who wants a job has one, everyone has adequate housing and no one is poor or marginalised. Imagine a society where communities care for their weaker members, where enlightened governance encourages talent, initiative, freedom, choice and responsibility; where collaborative participation, altruism and solidarity within an agreed and inclusive set of social values are the norm. Imagine a land whose natural grandeur, ecosystems and biodiversity are protected for all time, through the use of sustainable living arrangements which enable humanity to tread lightly on its surface.

This research postulates that as a society, and within government, we have chosen to downplay our social morality, our inherited ethical frameworks for ensuring that the above benefits are available to everyone in New Zealand. The ethics are not new, but self-interest and the pace of our lives, cause us to neglect the common good and ignore the hardship faced by poor people. Government policy inevitably reflects the values and aspirations of society at large, especially those of powerful people within society.

This chapter traces the major developments in the discourse on social and environmental justice. An emerging ethical discourse connecting these two ethics – namely ‘just sustainability’ – is also explored. These three concepts are material to the research concerns – whether we are ‘doing good’ through the impacts of policy decisions on people and on the environment, and if not, how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching could help us ‘do better,’ for the optimal development of humanity and of our relationship with the rest of creation.

## 2.1 The nature and concerns of social justice

Social justice is a contested term, focusing on the responsibilities of society and government for the wellbeing of all its members. It is often represented as a search for an equitable balance between benefits and burdens. In discussing the relationship between social justice and social policy, Duncan (2004:13) observes that: 'Debates over social policy are frequently about what is 'fair' or 'equitable' about rights of access, about who should benefit from government powers and who should bear the costs or responsibilities.' Barry (2005:5) notes that income and wealth distribution under the capitalist system has become increasingly unequal and that the open market has failed to provide everyone with the necessities of life. Structural change, in his view, is a prerequisite for social justice because of market and policy failure.

### *Social justice theory*

Much of the contemporary social justice discourse had its origins in the work of Rawls. He was a liberal social contract<sup>i</sup> theorist whose examination of justice in 'the basic structures of society' reflected his concern with the prevailing norms of utilitarianism.<sup>ii</sup> He believed that the dominant ethic of 'maximising utility' failed to ensure fairness in society, because of its focus on mutual advantage and fulfilment only for those who could access it, rather than on equality.<sup>iii</sup> Rawls (1999:3) defined justice as fairness, in the sense of freedom and opportunity. He articulated principles of 'greatest equal liberty' (ibid:180-1), 'difference' (ibid:65-9) and 'fair equality of opportunity' (ibid:73-6) to substantiate his views. He saw social justice as 'the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social contribution' (Rawls 1999:6; Wellman 2001:64-9; Sandel 1984:39-44).

While Rawls (1999:6) asserted that his subject matter was social justice for all, as defined from an ‘original position’ or ‘veil of ignorance’ about people’s prior circumstances, his conclusions reflect an orientation to individual rights. He placed in a prominent position the ‘Principle of Greatest Equal Liberty.’ It means that everyone has the right to basic freedoms to the extent compatible with everyone else’s ability also to enjoy these freedoms. His ‘Fair Equality of Opportunity Principle’ advocates equitable access without discrimination to all contenders for public office and other jobs (Rawls 1999:62-3, 73-4; Wellman 2001:66; Kymlicka 2002:60-1; Wolff 2008:18).

Rawls’s ‘Difference Principle’ targets disadvantage. Inequalities in society should be distributed to maximise benefit to those who are least advantaged. The politics of public resource redistribution find provenance in this aspect of Rawls’s work. His assertion that the level of social justice should be assessed by the experiences of society’s poorest members is reprised fifteen years later by the American Catholic Bishops in their influential document *Economic Justice for All* (USCCB 1986).

Rawls was challenged by Nozick who saw justice as individual entitlement, or ‘holdings,’ with no social component (Nozick 1974:151). He focused on ‘the fairness or otherwise of the process by which material goods and other benefits are acquired, rather than on their actual distribution’ (Craig, Burchardt & Gordon 2008:5). Nozick’s view was influenced by Friedrich Hayek,<sup>iv</sup> for whom justice was based on individual merit (Hayek 1967) and who, in *The Mirage of Social Justice*, repudiated social justice as ‘intellectually disreputable’ and ‘a hollow incantation’ with ‘no meaning whatsoever’ (Hayek 1976:xii, 96-7; Lenches 2001:35; Clayton and Williams (eds) 2004:94; Friesen 2007:145-6).

As far as Hayek, Nozick and their followers were concerned, process was more important than outcome. Redistribution of private property, including income tax, conflicted with personal freedom. Choice and responsibility carried personal consequences. In the ideal of a rights-driven meritocracy, 'The minimal state is the most extensive state that can be justified (Nozick 1974:149). The views of Nozick and Hayek plus Friedman's economics (1977) underpin neoliberal political philosophy.

Other key thinkers formulated their own notions of social justice. From an egalitarian position, Dworkin (1985:206-7) interpreted it as 'equality of resources.' Acknowledging that misfortune can influence people's use of talents and access to resources, he suggested that, while choices have consequences, justice requires resource redistribution to those in adverse circumstances through no fault of their own (ibid). He considered that 'treating people as equals' differs from 'treating people equally' (ibid:209-10). Policies and allocation decision-makers should bear that in mind, while noting that rewards accrue to those who work hard and insure themselves against adversity or bad luck (ibid:212-3; Wellman 2002:96-7; Clayton and Williams (eds) 2004:110-133; Piachaud 2008:34-5; Wolff 2008:19-21).

In his seminal text *Spheres of Justice* (1983) Walzer challenged Rawls's universal principles of justice and individualistic single concept of equality. For Walzer, justice is based on mutual respect, sound relationships and fair resource distribution in communities, rather than being individualised. To address this, he framed a theory of 'complex equality' (Walzer 1983:18-9). He identified 'spheres of justice' (domains such as the economy, politics, the family) as contexts within which needs and goals could be met, on the basis of 'free exchange,' 'desert' or 'need' (ibid:2-6, 65; Wellman 2001:73-4; Kymlicka 2002:196-7). Walzer's view of social justice was relational and contextualised, a 'local account' of the structures and processes (spheres) that make up 'a shared way of life' (ibid:314). This contrasts with Rawls' 'veil of ignorance' approach to developing principles of justice.

Over the past 40 years, communitarian views on the relationships between individuals, society and government and the implications of these links for social justice have emerged. Etzioni (1996b), Sandel (1996) and Tam (1998) are their major proponents. Communitarianism holds that relationships define one's place in society (Heywood 2002:173). Communitarianism has similarities with CST, which also prioritises human interdependency, reciprocity, charity and altruism. Consensus via community associations is said to ensure just decisions on public resource distribution in a manner that pursues the common good<sup>v</sup> (Etzioni 1999:6). Tam (1998:13-17) identifies three principles of communitarianism, namely 'cooperative inquiry,' 'mutual responsibility' and 'citizen participation.' Similar relational perspectives permeate CST, as Chapters 3 and 4 elaborate.

Sen offers egalitarian views on justice in developing economies (Wolff 2008:23). His main contribution to the social justice discourse is the concept of 'capability' which is central to just development outcomes. He identifies equality as a successful universal policy outcome, but to contextualise social justice, he asks 'Equality of what?' and 'Equality for whom?' In *Inequality Reexamined* (1992:ix) Sen sees equality in terms of income, welfare, utility and rights. He focuses on functional capability, given people's differing needs and aspirations. Equal does not mean identical (ibid:26). Equal opportunity matters, but equal outcomes are not realistic or appropriate. Incomes vary because of the choices we each make and that variation is completely just. For Sen, capability or 'freedom to achieve' is the core of social justice (ibid:31), which entails the unimpeded capability of everyone to access opportunities in the first place (Burchardt 2008).

Barry (2005:81) argues that income redistribution treats only the symptoms of social injustice. He observes that: 'Those who have more disposable resources are able to manipulate public policy in their favour at the expense

of those with fewer.’ While noting the role of ‘effort’ in creating ‘just inequalities,’ (ibid:42) he comments, like Sen, that: ‘Meritocracy ... can not by itself justify large rewards because the opportunities to achieve “merit” are unequal’ (ibid:110). There is a more basic need, in Barry’s view, for reassessment of the ethics of social, political and institutional structures that cause poverty and disadvantage (ibid:169). Informed reappraisal of these structures regarding their ability to deliver social justice requires attention to social justice and resource redistribution within communities.

In comparing the views of the social justice theorists, the main differences lie in their starting points – whether they conceive the purpose of social justice as (1) absolute equality of outcome, (2) relative equality of opportunity, (3) capability to achieve or (4) an emphasis on the needs of poor citizens. There are differences in the importance assigned to (1) prior conditions affecting people’s ability to succeed, (2) personal responsibility and choice, (3) outcomes as distinct from processes and (4) the role of the state in ensuring all have access to adequate resources and opportunities. As this research elucidates (in Chapters 15 and 16), the role of government and the thrust of social policy should together ensure an inclusive society, where all have resources and opportunities for their own development and social participation, and no one is left in need. Particular policy and servicing attention should be paid to vulnerable people.

### *The discourse on social justice in New Zealand*

In New Zealand, social justice theorists are concerned with conceptions of freedom and fairness; the meaning of equality and its application to people’s opportunities and outcomes; the right to property and earned income; the role and extent of government taxation and intervention; the extent to which poor people should be subsidised from public resources; capability for social participation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Evidence abounds that, in the local discourse as in others, ‘There is not even agreement about whether liberty, equality, solidarity or the common good is the primary cornerstone on which the edifice of justice is to be constructed’ (McCormick 2003:8). Such is the concern of political ideology. It also underpins my rationale for proposing greater emphasis on moral/ ethical reflection as social policies are developed. An absence of community norms for social justice creates risks for disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

Much New Zealand debate on social justice relates to the socio-economic policy paradigm shifts made by governments over the past three decades. Commentators such as Easton (1980; 1996), Shirley (1996), Hazledine (1998, 2000), Rudd and Roper (1997), Boston, Dalziel and St John (1999), Kelsey (1999; 2002), Roper (2005, 2008) and Cheyne, O’Brien and Belgrave (2004; 2008) promote social justice through income redistribution, from a left-wing perspective. They analyse social impacts and assess public policy in terms of its effects on vulnerable members of the community.

Other authors combine social justice and religious perspectives. Smithies (1994, 2000, 2003a, 2003b), for example, works explicitly from the social justice strand of Catholicism. Her work is examined later in this research project, theoretically and interactively. Henare’s (1999) social justice advocacy for Maori is also based on CST. Comparable values are apparent in the work of the Christian social activists Waldegrave (1998) and Roberts (1988, 1992, 2005). Such values are also discernible in the work of Shirley (1996), Boston (1994a, 1998a, 1998b, 2000) and Ahdar (2000, 2001).

From the classical liberal and neoliberal perspectives, Green (1996), Scott (2001), Bates (2001), and Buchanan and Hartley (2000) exemplify the ‘justice’ commentary in New Zealand from a right-wing orientation. They

focus on individual liberty, public sector structural reform and free market economics. Social benefits, such as reduction of poverty, are interpreted as an inevitable ‘trickle-down’ from economic growth. This view contrasts sharply with the left-wing stance. These two positions represent the political poles between which the CST and secular discourses relating to social and economic justice take place in New Zealand.

With the implementation of the ‘Working for Families’ social policy package from 2004 onwards, social analysts working with organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group and the Salvation Army produced reports on poverty, highly critical of ‘Third Way’<sup>vi</sup> government policy between 1999 and 2008 (see St John and Craig 2004, Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b, Johnson 2007, 2008a and St John and Wynd 2008.) Despite the Labour-led government’s claims of ‘investment in people’ (MSD 2004a) ‘social development’ did not produce social justice, in the view of these advocacy bodies. Third Way social policy has proven too dependent on right-wing economic policies to address entrenched injustice.

With the advent of a National-led centre-right government in 2008, non-government organisational commentary during 2009 portrayed continuing social deficits in key areas such as housing and employment (NZCCSS 2009a). The impacts of global recession affected employment availability negatively but had some positive impacts on housing affordability (ibid; NZCCSS 2009b). In an environment where many families struggle to make ends meet, any pronouncements from the present centre-right government on hardship and its alleviation are seen by the Salvation Army and the Child Poverty Action Group as too little, too late and framed by neo-liberalism. They had also criticised the social policy of the Labour-led government of 1999-2008 as limited and lacking inclusiveness, despite its claims to the contrary, so nothing has improved with the change of government as far as they are concerned (Salvation Army 2008b, 2009).



## **2.2 The nature and concerns of environmental justice**

The term ‘environmental justice’ refers to the requirement in equity for the ecological benefits and burdens of economic activity to be shared evenly among all sectors of the community, rather than poor communities bearing the brunt of adverse environmental impact (Mich 1998:400). It is concerned with ‘Who benefits and who pays for the cost of the environment and its degradation’ (Adebowale 2008:256). It demands policies designed to reduce the gaps between the ability of wealthy people to insulate themselves from damaging impacts, which they often cause through excessive consumption, and the fate of poor people to bear the brunt of them (Shiva 2005).

From an environmental justice perspective, all should have access to natural resources and input to decision-making on their protection, conservation and use. The CST principles of ‘responsible stewardship,’ ‘preferential option for the poor,’ and ‘the universal destination of goods’ reflect this ideal, with its repudiation of unjust decisions affecting powerless people and their access to resources.<sup>vii</sup> The ‘nexus’ of environmental justice and sustainability demonstrates urgent moral issues (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003:9). These issues are entwined causally with those in the foregoing social justice commentary. As Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (ibid:77) put it: ‘Wherever in the world environmental despoliation and degradation are happening, they are almost always linked to questions of social justice, equity, rights and people’s quality of life in the widest sense.’

The discourses on environmental justice, sustainability and environmental ethics converge in this section of the research, as an ethical framework is sought for human attitudes and responsibilities towards the natural world.

Over two centuries, Western societies benefited materially from democratic political processes, the Industrial Revolution and the development of the capitalist market economy. The free goods of nature were seen as a 'cornucopia' sufficient for all human requirements. Perceptions changed, however, in the 1960s, as adverse environmental impacts from growth and development became apparent.

In 1963, Carson, noticing biodiversity reduction in streams and other ecosystems due to chemical pollution, published *The Silent Spring*. A series of influential books followed. These expressed concern for the carrying capacity of the Earth and the survival of humanity if unrestrained population growth, resource depletion and economic development continued at present rates. Prominent among these books were *The Population Bomb* (Erich 1968), *Blueprint for Survival* (Goldsmith *et al* 1972), *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows *et al* 1972), and Schumacher's (1973) *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. These works all advocated severe curtailment of economic growth (Elliott 1999).

Other seminal thinking on environmental sustainability includes Hardin on the 'tragedy of the commons' (1968) and on 'carrying capacity' (1974); Daly and Cobb on the ethics and politics of 'enough' (1989); Simon on nature as a 'cornucopia' (1996); Wackernagel and Rees on 'ecological footprints' (1996); Hawken on business sustainability through 'natural capitalism' (1999); and Boyle and Conisbee's edited work on sustainability, entitled *Return to Scale* (2003). The message in all this material and in that which followed it (e.g. Shiva 2005; Hawken 2007; McKibben 2007), is to respect the fragility of natural ecosystems, tread lightly and consume less.

The literature on sustainability also includes United Nations Conventions, Protocols and conference documents. Prominent among this work, the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) defined sustainable development as ‘that which meets the needs of the present, while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED 1987:43). The concept requires trade-offs between social, economic and environmental objectives. It has an ethical dimension, partly because of the inequality inherent in skewed power relationships and partly due to ecological damage resulting from decisions by those with coercive economic and political power. The Brundtland Report identified five sustainability outcomes, namely:

- Inter-generational equity (do not compromise the future)
- Intra-generational equity (ensure fair resource distribution)
- The precautionary principle (avoid environmental damage)
- Conservation of biodiversity (save species from extinction: and
- The internalisation of external costs (polluters pay)

These outcomes have dominated environmental discourse and legislation for the past two decades. The Earth Charter (UNCED 1992), which is also known as Agenda 21, corroborates their enduring importance. In fact, ‘The Earth Charter is probably the best and most comprehensive ... ethical foundation for a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset’ (Peet 2009). More recently the Charter has been supplemented by extensive debates and strategies related to global warming, as climate change has become more visible (Stern 2006; SANZ 2006; Boston 2007; Lovelock 2006, 2009). Papal teaching has contributed to the sustainability discourse, framed in CST as ‘respect for creation’ or ‘respect for life’ (CIV 2009:28, 48).

The concept of sustainability is based on environmental ethics. This is ‘a systematic account of the moral relations between human beings and their natural environment’ (des Jardins 2001:11). Social justice and environmental justice involve the inequities of poverty and powerlessness, and the ethic of sustainability. The writings of Pearce, Markandya and

Barbier (1989), Cobb (1992), Maley (1994), Mather and Chapman (1995), de Shalit (1995), Westra and Werhane (1998), Phillips and Mighall (2000), des Jardins (2001), Shiva (2005) and Hawken (2007) all focus on environmental awareness as a driver for policy thinking on sustainability.

Cobb (1992:31) advocates 'ethical alternatives to excess natural resource use and pollution.' He notes, however, that altruism appears not to motivate those with resources, despite a moral requirement for wealthy communities to assist those less fortunate (ibid). In the mode of Schumacher (1973) Berry reminds us, through his '17 rules for sustainability' that 'we have the right to what we need to sustain life, support our families and participate in our communities, and no more than that' (Berry 1999a; 1999b; 2003:415-430).

### *Environmental justice and sustainability in New Zealand*

New Zealand legislation is based on sustainable management, rather than on sustainable development. Under our Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), the environment takes precedence over human activity. The Act aims to achieve sustainability through empowerment of local communities. New Zealand's key contributors to the sustainability discourse include Dann (1988); Gillespie (1997); Matunga, Dixon, Grundy, Fooks, Austin and others, as represented in Ali Memon and Perkins (2000), Van Roon and Knight (2004), Peet (2006) and Roberts (2006.) The sustainability think-tank, Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand, provides a contemporary arena for expertise and advocacy on 'strong sustainability' (SANZ 2006, 2009).

Despite our brief history of development, New Zealand already has a legacy of environmental problems. These include ozone depletion; global warming through greenhouse gas emission; climate-related disasters; declining health of wetlands, streams, rivers and lakes, with habitat and biodiversity loss;

marine resource depletion; contamination of land and waterways by agricultural and industrial chemicals; erosion caused by the clearing of indigenous forest; exploitation of mineral resources and open-cast mining damage (Van Roon and Knight 2004; SANZ 2006). These forms of degradation compromise the wellbeing of low-income rural communities in particular (Roberts 2006:11-13; PCE 2009; SANZ 2009).

Rapid and poorly managed urbanisation has exacerbated dependence on private transport, congesting motorways, where air pollution from lead and carbon monoxide adds to nearby industrial pollution. Housing developments have caused coastal degradation. Pressure on waste disposal facilities is now apparent in many cities (PCE 2002; Peet 2006, Roberts 2006; Vale and Eason 2006; SANZ 2009:5). These kinds of degradation are most evident in low-income urban localities. In common with the damage in rural areas outlined above, they constitute environmental injustice.

### **2.3 The integrated concept of just sustainability**

Just sustainability is a relatively recent discourse which combines social justice, environmental justice and sustainable development as a strategic outcome for public policy and private economic activity. It enhances the concept of sustainable development by redefining it as ‘the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems’ (Agyeman *et al* 2002:78; 2003:5). It links the discourses of environmental justice (Cobb 1992) and sustainable development (WCED 1987; UNCED 1992) and has close links to social justice as equality (Rawls 1971/1999) and as capacity for effective participation (Sen 2002; Shiva 2005).

Just sustainability was first promulgated by Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2002) in 'Exploring the Nexus: Bringing together sustainability, environmental justice and equity.' This article, originating from the environmental justice discourse, formed the basis of *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World* (2003). In 'Just Sustainability: the emerging discourse of environmental justice in Britain?' Agyeman and Evans (2004:3) described just sustainability as 'A balanced approach including an explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together.' The key message in their continuing analysis and commentary is that:

A truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity, are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems... Unless society strives for a greater level of social and economic equity, both within and between nations, the long-term objective of a more sustainable world is unlikely to be secured (Agyeman Bullard and Evans 2002:78).

Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2003:160) state that policy analysis of ecological damage must examine its cause, which they claim is social injustice, since: 'The poor are not the major polluters. On the contrary, most environmental pollution is caused by the actions of the more affluent' (ibid). As SANZ (2009:16-19, 27-30) illustrates for New Zealand, this requires society and government to think and act differently in terms of decision-making, community impacts and which interests are being served:

Whilst many, if not most, governments at all levels have adopted some kind of commitment to sustainable development, few, if any, recognise the importance of placing this within a context of social justice, equity and human rights. The need to ensure that public policy ... does not disproportionately disadvantage any particular social group, and affords equality for all, must be a precondition for a move towards just and sustainable societies (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003:163).

Writers such as Hawken (2007) and McKibben (2007) endorse in principle the ‘just sustainability’ paradigm, though they do not label it as such. In *Blessed Unrest* (2007) Hawken refers to a ‘convergence’ of social and environmental justice thinking and activism. He has noticed widespread activism aimed at poverty elimination and protection of the ecosystem to prevent its collapse. As Hawken (2007:76) observes: ‘Concerns about worker health, living wages, equity, education and basic human rights are inseparable from concerns about water, climate, soil and biodiversity.’ With reference to Pilger (2002), Shiva (2005) and Lovelock (2006), Hawken describes a new paradigm that encapsulates human desire for peace with each other and with nature – just sustainability, in effect. In the public policy arena, this requires: ‘Re-imagination of public governance emerging from place, culture and people’ (Hawken 2007:18).

In my view, the concept of just sustainability provides ethical policy integration. It explains the causal relationships between social injustice (poverty, disadvantage and powerlessness), environmental injustice (unfair distribution of environmental evils) and inability to achieve sustainability if any of its key elements (social, environmental, economic or cultural) create inequality or cause environmental harm (Agyeman Bullard and Evans 2003). Its unification of divergent streams of ethical thinking makes it relevant to both the originating paradigms for this research, namely Catholic Social Teaching and the impacts of public policy outcomes.

Recurrent contentions in the public policy and sustainability literature that good governance is essential for just sustainability are relevant to my research questions. The prescriptions for change involve new structures, policy ethics, public debate and new consensus (Roberts 2006:16-7). Our dilemma concerns the relationship between humanity, the ecosystem and all other species. Humans have evolved to a pre-eminent position because of

intelligence, but human-induced impacts on the ecosystem suggest that our intelligence is not always harnessed to best effect.

We are capable of appreciating and acting upon the ethical imperatives of just sustainability, but are we motivated sufficiently to do so? Can New Zealand's politicians and policy developers envision a shared future that is both just and sustainable? Can they articulate it for practical application? Is there potential for an explicit ethical framework, such as CST, to assist them to do this, and then, with our concurrence, act upon it? The next two chapters explore the principles, practice and potential of CST, to enable us to explore these questions further.

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<sup>i</sup> Social contract theory originated with John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, post-Enlightenment political philosophers who believed that ceding some personal freedom to elected government would ensure personal and property security, moderate individual greed and competitiveness and promote social harmony (Sigmund 1971; Heywood 2002; Kymlicka 2002; Duncan 2004)

<sup>ii</sup> Utilitarianism is a post-Enlightenment political theory with an individualistic free market focus which describes humans as 'rational utility maximisers.'

<sup>iii</sup> Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and John Stuart Mill developed the theory of utilitarianism, in the light of Adam Smith's laissez-faire economics and advocacy of a minimalist government role. See firstly Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776/1961), then Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1863), in which 'the greatest happiness' was put forward as the most 'rational' approach to government decision-making. (see Mills 1969/1992: 113-172).

<sup>iv</sup> Friedrich Hayek was a leading exponent of market economics and monetarism, ideas which influenced the economic ideology and public policy of most Western democracies during the 1980s and 1990s. See Hayek's *The Mirage of Social Justice*, the second volume of *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (1976).

<sup>v</sup> Some liberals see communitarianism as coercive, when individual freedom is subject to communal decisions. See Heywood (2002:173) for an explanation of left-wing, centrist and right-wing communitarianism as regards the normative locus of control. The left-wing perspective, for example, emphasises the precedence of group consensus over individual autonomy.

<sup>vi</sup> The 'politics of the Third Way,' described by Giddens (1998) as 'the renewal of social democracy,' represents a half-way position between neoliberal monetarism and interventionist welfare politics, focused on 'social development.' See New Zealand official documents such as 'The Social Development Approach' (MSD 2001) and 'Towards an Inclusive Economy' (NZ Treasury 2001), both Third Way influenced.

<sup>vii</sup> The principles of Catholic Social Teaching are canvassed fully in Chapters Three and Four to follow.



## Chapter Three

### Catholic Social Teaching and today's concerns

From the foregoing reflections on just sustainability, the research focus now moves to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as my proposed avenue to move towards public policy outcomes of just sustainability in New Zealand. From its faith-based position, CST advocates for just societies and life-giving human interactions with the rest of creation. In a secular setting (as Chapter 2 has shown) the concept of just sustainability does likewise. Chapter 3 suggests alignments between the principles of CST and the elements of just sustainability, while examining the idea that adopting the former would help us towards achievement of the latter. The CST principles embody a unique contribution to strengthening social morality.<sup>i</sup>

*The Social Agenda* (PCJP 2000) and *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching* (USCCB 1998b) have been used to categorise the principles in the first instance. I have then clustered them to suit the purposes of this research, into a group of eight concerned with society and the environment, followed by a group of six which address issues of economic justice and the ethics of political and policy decision-making.

The eight CST principles relating to social and environmental ethics are: human dignity and authentic development; the family as the foundation of society; the common good and solidarity; freedom, rights and reciprocal responsibilities; social justice and equality; the preferential option for the poor; respect for cultural autonomy and diversity, and stewardship of creation and sustainability. These are the subject of Chapter Three.

The six CST principles pertaining to the political economy are economic justice; the universal destination of public and private goods; the dignity of work, fair wages and the rights of workers; subsidiarity, supplementation and the role of government; effective participation in civil and political processes, global and local development and peace. This second group is canvassed in Chapter Four.

### 3.1 Scoping the CST literature review

The CST literature is extensive. Most commentators include at least 13 documents in the CST Magisterium. These comprise ten papal Social Encyclicals; two Pastoral Constitutions written by synods of bishops and signed off by the Pope; and an Apostolic Letter, which has the same status as an encyclical, though written for a senior clerical audience rather than a public one (Massaro 2000a; Curran 2002; de Berri and Hug *et al* 2003; Himes 2005). The documents are itemised as follows:

- *Rerum Novarum: On the Condition of Labour* (Pope Leo XIII 1891)
- *Quadragesimo Anno: The Reconstruction of the Social Order* (Pope Pius XI 1931)
- *Mater et Magistra: Christianity and Social Progress* (Pope John XXIII 1961)
- *Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth* (Pope John XXIII 1963)
- *Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Second Vatican Council/ Pope Paul VI 1965)
- *Populorum Progressio: The Development of Peoples* (Pope Paul VI 1967)
- *Octogesima Adveniens: A Call to Action* (Pope Paul VI 1971)
- *Iustitia in Mundo: Justice in the World* (World Synod / Pope Paul VI 1971)
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the Modern World* (Pope Paul VI 1975)
- *Laborem Exercens: On Human Work* (Pope John Paul II 1981)
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern* (Pope John Paul II 1987)
- *Centesimus Annus: The Hundredth Year* (Pope John Paul II 1991) and
- *Caritas in Veritate: Charity in Truth* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009) <sup>ii</sup>

The most recent social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) defines charity as spontaneous giving and the energy that drives CST. It highlights the importance of universal truth in a world that relativises it. Charity and truth inform justice, which in turn serves the common good. The task of the Church is to apply criteria of charity, truth and justice to social, political, commercial and governance processes, in the hope that decisions will foster the authentic development of the people affected by them.<sup>iii</sup> The Pope makes important links between respect for people, respect for the environment and respect for life itself.

The CST Magisterium is augmented by pastoral statements from bishops' conferences, including an important liberation theology discourse emanating from South America. While social encyclicals and bishops' pastoral statements authoritatively frame the Catholic approach to social justice, the CST discourse is also enriched by insights from theologians, academics and social commentators. Seminal writers include Ryan (1912), Cronin (1959), Courtney Murray (1960) and Maritain (1950a, 1950b). These theologians wrote when, in Catholic communities, social morality could be taken as read, because natural law<sup>iv</sup> was its accepted ethical basis (Sigmund 1988). This is no longer the case in contemporary society, with its 'competing anthropological visions' (CIV 2009:18).

Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, is framed according to a natural law argument. The gist of the Pope's argument is that universal truths about right and wrong reside in all human hearts and that we are all capable of recognising, understanding and acting upon them. The CST principles themselves are based on natural law, so no one should find them mystifying. Their common heritage makes them accessible to all, irrespective of religion or culture. This is helpful as a starting point for social policy, the purpose of which should be to recognise the needs of all in making fair and justifiable resource allocations.

Among earlier CST commentators, Sigmund (1971; 1988), Hollenbach (1979; 2002), Coleman (1991), Novak (1991), Duncan (1991), Dorr (1992), Byron (1998), Mich (1998), Boileau (1998), Cort (1998), Vallely (1998), Baum and Ellsberg (1999) and Charles (1999) have all written significantly during the past three decades. Sigmund's contribution includes analysis of natural law and of the development of liberation theology; Hollenbach has focused on the relationship between CST and human rights; Novak writes on CST, democracy and capitalism; Mich provides in-depth analysis of social Catholicism and environmental ethics; and Vallely focuses on the links between CST and politics.

Recent Catholic commentators include Pennock (2000), Weigel (2000), Massaro (2001), Gregg (2001; 2002), Curran (2002), Massaro and Shannon (2002), Malinvaud and Archer (2003), de Berri, Hug *et al* (2003) and Himes (2005). Significant work has been contributed by Curran and McCormick (1986), Curran and Griffin (2001) and Curran as sole editor (2003) in the series *Readings in Moral Theology* (5, 12 and 13 respectively). Theologians' contributions to organisations such as the Acton Institute and the Center for Concern provide CST input into peer-reviewed journals canvassing topics in philosophy, religion and social analysis.

New Zealand CST material comes from the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference and its social justice agency, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. The annual 'Social Justice Week' booklets focus on social and environmental justice. In New Zealand, today's writers and practitioners of the CST principles face different challenges from those of earlier contributors. In pluralistic communities, with reduced levels of agreement on what the common good is, they have to build moral consensus within the Catholic community, and then interpret CST for the community at large and its policy-makers (de Jong and Beech 2007, 2009; Beech 2008).

### 3.2 The origins and development of the CST principles

The early literature trail for CST is well-traversed, starting with the Ten Commandments. Exodus (34:14-28)<sup>v</sup> and Deuteronomy (4:13; 10:4) indicate that they were given to the Israelites to enable them to develop a community within the environment which replaced their former conditions of slavery, so that they could experience ‘freedom lived according to laws that liberate’ (Weigel 2001:81). A later seminal code of conduct is found in the Sermon on the Mount, which produced the eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-11; also see Luke 6:20-38). Weigel identifies their ‘promise of eternal happiness’ for those at risk of disadvantage. He stresses their fundamental teaching ‘that our acts have the most profound consequences because what we do makes us into the kind of people we are. And what we are determines what we can be...’ (Weigel 2001:77).

Patristic social thought<sup>vi</sup> and scholasticism<sup>vii</sup> contributed many of the concepts which underpin CST. Aquinas’s teaching on natural law as the basis for the common good was influential prior to the Second Vatican Council and was resurgent during the time of Pope John Paul II. In both these strands of philosophy, the ethical concerns were property ownership and responsibilities, poverty, church/ state relationships and the role of government – all very much the focus of CST today and continuously reflected in social encyclicals (Sigmund 1988:xxi-xxvii; Coleman 1991:2-9; Charles 1999:66-68; Smithies 2003a:27-34; Himes 2005).

Social Catholicism in Europe provided the context for the seminal social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). Activist Catholic movements responded to injustices evident as the Industrial Revolution progressed. Church leaders drew attention to the social pressures of industrialisation, such as families’ dislocation from their rural settings, child labour, extended work hours, unsanitary conditions, a role for factory inspectors and the need for workers to have adequate rest (Charles 1999; Mich 1998:7). Pope Leo XIII

incorporated these ideas in his encyclical, along with his views on justice and charity, poverty; the need for wages to sustain one-income families; the right of workers to own property and to form labour unions; the role of government; and the right of the Church to speak out on social issues (Mich 1998:21; O'Brien 1991:19).

Over the past 120 years, Popes, bishops, theologians and Catholic NGOs have contributed to the CST discourse. Episcopal guidance enriches the CST principles through middle axioms<sup>viii</sup> and lay commentators devise local applications for them. The principles themselves are now examined, to elucidate the extent to which this inherited wisdom might be applied in the New Zealand policy context, in the interests of just sustainability.

### **3.3 Human dignity and authentic development**

The first principle, human dignity, lies at the core of CST. It states that every person is worthy of respect by virtue of being a moral agent. Each one of us has free will and capacity to choose to 'do good.' Public policy has the capacity to affirm human dignity, or to compromise it, depending on how it is designed and implemented and on its planned or actual impacts. Decent housing and access to employment, for instance, are integral to sustaining human dignity. If barriers impede them, people's dignity is compromised.

In *Centesimus Annus* (1991:55) Pope John Paul II describes integral human personalism as a spiritual anthropology forming the basis of human dignity (Massaro 2001:80). The Pope stresses that authentic human development depends on people having a moral value base, and making choices in accordance with it, while being respectful of the needs of others. Herein lies the Pope's condemnation of the consumerism and self-absorption endemic

in the First World (SRS 1987; CA 1991). Pope Benedict XVI reiterated these concerns in his social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009).

Papal teaching emphasises that each of us makes subjective choices for which we must take personal responsibility. We are self-determining and self-actualising, with inherent capacity for spiritual transcendence, from which our dignity emanates (CA 1991; CIV 2009). CST is, accordingly, concerned with human rights, such as the rights to shelter and access to work, as expressions of our dignity. Here we fulfil our destinies, through personal development and altruistic interactions with others.

Papal views on integral human development represent the driving force that links the CST principles in terms of human dignity. In ‘doing more, having more and knowing more’ we should strive to ‘be more’ through authentic development which ‘promote[s] the good’ of each and every person (CIV 2009:18). Without its spiritual foundation, CST would be equivalent to a social theory or political philosophy. Based on natural law which governs social morality, it provides moral guidance to assist the development of justly sustainable outcomes, political decisions and policy processes.

### **3.4 The family as the foundation of society**

According to CST, government should implement policies that sustain the family, since it is the primary site for authentic human development. Large families can be disadvantaged by adverse policy effects. The current emphasis on market competition, consumerism, growth at all costs and individual acquisitiveness often compromises families’ ability to provide a stable, nurturing environment where their members can reach their potential.

The institution of the family is integral to CST. For Pope John Paul II the family is a ‘communion of persons.’ In *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) and *Familiaris Consortio* (1981b), he identifies the family as the source of nurture, guidance and development of its members to fulfil constructive roles in the community (McGovern 2003:8). Pope Benedict XVI asserts the ‘need to defend the primary competence of the family ... as opposed to the State and its restrictive policies’ (*CIV* 2009:44), because the ability to develop human potential depends on stable and loving family foundations. Public policy has a role in ensuring economic stability in communities, including equitable access to resources that underpin parental capacity to guide their children’s development (Massaro 2009c).

Charles (1999) and Massaro (2000) identify *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) as the CST document which illustrates most extensively the Church’s position on the social and economic pressures affecting families. Several encyclicals, such as Pope John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens* (1981), also stress the impact of social and economic policy on families as a key influence on family and community well-being. The CST tradition holds that adults should have the right of access to employment with a wage sufficient to maintain a family (Charles 1999:82-3). CST also affirms the right of families to affordable and adequate housing, so that family health is not compromised by poor surroundings or excessive accommodation costs (Massaro 2000a:127).

In *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) the Pope emphasises that the family is a private domain. Sometimes, however, direct involvement of a state agency might be called for, to prevent harm to the family as a whole or to any of its members, in which case the common good prevails over the family’s specific autonomy. The relevance of the CST ‘Family’ principle to this research is that within families some members have the responsibility to protect, lead, guide and earn income to sustain the family unit. Other members may not be self-reliant, because of age or other characteristics. The role of the family is to nurture all its members. The role of government,



through its social and economic policies, is to facilitate this process, in key areas such as housing and employment.

### **3.5 The common good and solidarity**

The ‘common good’ and ‘solidarity’ are key concepts in CST and should drive social and economic policy. In his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, Pope John XXIII describes the common good as ‘the sum total of conditions of social living, whereby persons are enabled more fully and readily to achieve their own perfection’ (*MM* 1961:65). In seeking the ‘good that is linked to living in society,’ (*CIV* 2009:7), we all find meaning through a web of relationships, rights and responsibilities.

De Berri, Hug *et al* (2003:23) reflect the CST relational view that individual rights and aspirations have meaning only in the context of community wellbeing. They note that the CST concept of the common good differs from the utilitarian ethic relating to the happiness of the greatest number of people. In his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) Pope Paul VI spelled out the contribution of government to the maintenance of social well-being or the common good:

Political power ... must have as its aim the achievement of the common good. While respecting the legitimate liberties of individuals, families and subsidiary groups, it acts in such a way as to create, effectively and for the well-being of all, the conditions required for attaining humanity’s true and complete good (*OA* 1971:46).

Catholic Social Teaching stresses that people achieve their own potential through contributing in solidarity, as social beings, to the common good. Pope Paul VI canvasses this theme in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*

(1967), Pope John Paul II returns to it in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), and Pope Benedict XVI emphasises it in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:7). Solidarity is the principle which underpins this relationship between individuals and communities.

Solidarity can be interpreted as the collective result of the altruism shown by all those who actually care what happens to other members of society, when so many do not. Pope Benedict talks about ‘inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within one community of the human family’ (*CIV* 2009:54). He comments on ‘the urgency of a solidarity which embraces time and space’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2010:8). Group or community solidarity, also known as social cohesion, is manifest in advocacy, personal support, expert assistance, social services, voluntary work, collaborative action and ‘spontaneous gift’ or acts of kindness.

While the meaning and application of ‘social cohesion’ is contested in the discourse of social development, it was used as a social policy-making driver in New Zealand during the late 1990s, to address socio-economic pressures which had emerged from the neo-liberal policy framework of the day. It does not mean control or uniformity. In the CST sense of ‘solidarity,’ social cohesion has continuing relevance to policy-making.

Pulling together in solidarity for the common good is an issue in today’s pluralist societies. As sections 3.9 and 4.1 (later in this document) elucidate, the meaning of ‘common good’ is contested today, because cultural diversity and ethical relativism are the norm (Coleman 2005:538-9). As Hollenbach (2002:2) points out, differences among groups in communities are such that there is little likelihood of achieving consensus on what constitutes the common good. MacIntyre (1988) notes that governments are not equipped to determine what the common good is for all their citizens and neither are communities themselves (also see Crosson 2001:109). This

lacuna creates challenges for governments, but it does not mean they can abrogate their responsibilities for social solidarity and the common good.

### **3.6 Freedom, rights and reciprocal responsibilities**

A tension is evident in CST, and in secular discourse, between the focus on the individual, responsible for following his or her destiny, and the person as a social being, receptive to the aspirations and needs of family and community. In everyday life, different sets of rights frequently conflict, with one being subordinated to the other, or the balance between them changing, often for reasons of expediency rather than moral worth (Hollenbach 1979).

Papal teaching supports humanity's need for personal and political freedom, to facilitate authentic development through the exercise of free will. The encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) all stress a moral requirement for people to choose to work together for the benefit of all. The role of the state and public policy is to enable this to occur, without compromising the freedom and the rights of individuals and communities to chart their own courses and take accountability for them.

The effective exercise of rights and responsibilities implies that people are equal and enjoy a socially just environment. While human rights are based on individual concerns and social justice has a systemic, institutional focus, the two are inseparable in practice, even when they are in conflict. In *Claims in Conflict* (1979), Hollenbach refers to the myriad of claims for resourcing, which emanate both from individuals and from interest groups. Competing claims demand trade-offs and compromises. Good governance requires ethical input to policy-making as trade-offs and compromises are navigated.

### 3.7 Social justice and equality

For CST, social justice is about fairness of process, opportunity and outcome, to ensure that everyone has what they need to sustain life, support their families and participate in their communities. Thus it involves access for everyone to the necessities of life (food, clothing, housing, education, health services, income and employment). Social justice has featured in all the social encyclicals since *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), in which Pius XI declared that ‘Human societies should be conformed to the requirements of the common good; that is, to the norm of social justice’ (QA 1931:110). Throughout the social Magisterium, love, charity and the common good underpin the principle of social justice. Smithies (1994:157) comments that ‘charity [is] a reactive expression of love, social justice a proactive one.’ In its introduction, *Gaudium et Spes* specifies the Church’s responsibility as an advocate for social justice:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (GS 1965:1).

In *Claims in Conflict*, Hollenbach (1979:204) proposes three ‘strategic moral priorities’ at the heart of social justice in the CST tradition. These are that: ‘The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich; the freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful; [and] the participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them.’ Within CST, as in the secular discourse on social justice, there are diverse views on the extent to which people should give or receive the goods of the earth, according to their rights, their due, their efforts, their merit or their needs. Also contested is the degree to which those who have sufficient for their needs plus a surplus, should share with those less fortunate.

The CST debate on social justice includes polarised views among liberals and conservatives, communitarians and social democrats, in the same way that the secular discourse does. While papal teaching is explicit that CST itself subscribes to no political ideology (*QA* 1931:46; *CA* 1991:43; *CIV* 2009:9), Catholics live in a political world. Their political preferences act as a filter as they align core CST principles to their worldly realities. Many identify with the political left-wing (e.g. Hollenbach (1979), Cort (1988), Coleman (1991), Dorr (1992), Mich (1998), Curran (2002), Massaro (1998, 2000a), Pennock (2000), Himes (2005), Goodman (2009a) and Medaille (2009b). The Catholic right-wing is represented by Sirico (1998), Gregg (1999), Hill (2000), Weigel (2000) and Novak (1991, 2001, 2003a, 2009a). The Catholic communitarian view is expressed by Etzioni (1996a, 1996b).

Despite this divergence of Catholic opinion on social justice due to people's political standpoints, the Church has established its own ground. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965:66), states that 'to satisfy the demands of justice and equity, strenuous efforts must be made ... to remove as quickly as possible ... economic inequalities ... connected with individual and social discrimination.' For New Zealand's public policy, the 1993 *Social Justice Statement*, promulgated ecumenically by New Zealand's bishops, provides a comprehensive picture of the concerns of social justice:

'Social justice is: fairness in our dealings with other people; fairness in the way responsibilities are shared; fairness in the distribution of incomes, wealth and power in our society; fairness in the social, economic and political structures we have created; fairness in the operation of those structures so that they enable all citizens to be active and productive participants in the life of society' (Smithies and Wilson 1993; NZCCSS 2009e).

The above insights are consistent with *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) and with the document from the World Bishops' Synod, *Iustitia in Mundo* (1971). Local CST commentary links magisterial insights with the concerns of the New Zealand community. It emphasises human life and dignity, conceptualising fairness as equity, participation, shared responsibility, solidarity and respect for New Zealand's indigenous culture (Smithies 1998:20).

### **3.8 The preferential option for the poor**

This is a Catholic expression relating to the choice available to all of us to use our skills and resources to support poor people in their quest for social and economic justice (Dorr 1992:2). The development of CST has long given encouragement to poverty-stricken and powerless people, many of whom regard the Church as a credible institution that can help them in a physical sense through charitable work, while advocating for them, and challenging the sources of unjustly applied power.

The social encyclicals provide reflective guidance and leadership regarding distributive justice, a major aspect of social justice. In 1931, Pope Pius XI 'warned of the serious danger of the consolidation of wealth which is the natural result of the unregulated free market' (*QA* 1931:29). The increasing gaps between rich and poor nations, and within societies, have entrenched inequalities which provide evidence for the Pope's view. These gaps remain in evidence today and politicians of the left and the right differ markedly in their interpretations of what they mean for justice.

The sources of social injustice lie in a combination of market capitalism and exploitation through colonisation and uneven economic growth (*IM* 1971:9). Pope John Paul II laid the responsibility for disparities on capitalist political and economic structures. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*

he states that, since injustice is caused by ‘structures of sin,’ the institutions that support such structures must be reformed (*SRS* 1987:36; *CA* 1991:29; 36; 58). More recently, in the light of a financial crisis exacerbating social injustice, Pope Benedict XVI called, in *Caritas in Veritate*, for ethics-based reform of financial and governance structures (*CIV* 2009: 25; 45; 65; 71).

Workers in public institutions often maintain unjust structures inadvertently. They usually have middle-class value systems and have not experienced poverty. Dorr suggests that: ‘Service people contribute to structural injustice through the kind of work they are doing’ (Dorr 1992:3). This includes policy-makers in government agencies. State servants are precluded by their codes of conduct (and constrained by their own survival instincts) from publicly challenging norms or decisions of the institutions in which, as staff, they have a vested interest. Yet they do make value judgments behind the scenes about the relative merits of clients’ circumstances (Lipsky 1980:509-13). As a result, complicity and acquiescence in injustice are not new.

### *Liberation theology and its significance for Catholic Social Teaching*

The 1979 definition by the Latin American Bishops’ Conference of the ‘preferential option for the poor’ (CELAM 1979: 1134-65) gave Catholic moral theology a ‘powerful summary and symbol of the active approach required to combat systemic injustice’ (Dorr 1992:262). Amid increasing worldwide evidence of the need for social justice, a colonised Latin American setting provided the crucible for a distinctive manifestation of Catholic Social Teaching, known as liberation theology.

Latin America demonstrated two hundred years of indigenous desperation, political volatility and dictatorial opportunism. Colonisation had generated political exploitation and social dislocation, which created extremes of

poverty and wealth. Catholic theologians, including bishops and priests working in the poorest locations, forced a re-think within Catholicism about the most effective route to social justice. The outputs from Latin American Bishops' Conferences in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979) and the writings of the liberation theologians enriched the CST discourse to an extent not foreseen in the Vatican. Rome responded negatively at first, because of an assumed link between liberation theology and revolutionary Marxism. It took some years for the Latin American bishops and the Vatican to find common ground (Dorr 1992:211).

The literature on liberation theology spans the seminal insights of Gutierrez (1988), Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1987), Galilea (1988), Camara (1971) and Segundo (1976), among others. The discourse includes statements from the Latin American bishops, together with guidance and instructions from the Vatican Congregation for the Defence of the Faith (Ratzinger 1984). Commentators on liberation theology include Novak (1987), Berryman (1984, 1987), Baum (1989), Rhodes (1991) and Sigmund (1990). In particular, Ellis and Maduro (1990) have canvassed the pioneering social activism and writings of Gutierrez. Rowland's edited collection of liberation theology contributions (1999) includes input from Gutierrez, West and Hebblethwaite, to track the discourse to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The political, social and economic dimensions in New Zealand are less extreme than those in Latin America, and 'conscientisation' (Freire 1972) to encourage revolution is not part of public discourse in this country. Yet Liberation Theology embodies a structural analysis, with a focus on justice that has wider relevance than its own socio-historical context. Aspects of this analysis may contribute to critical and constructive dialogue in this country between public policy developers and proponents of CST, relating to the 'preferential option for the poor' which is a difficult concept to 'sell' in a meritocratic society like ours.



### 3.9 Respect for cultural autonomy and diversity

At the instigation of Pope John XXIII and following the Second Vatican Council, CST evolved from a traditional Eurocentric world view, towards recognition of the intrinsic value of diverse cultures and spiritual contexts. In *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope Paul VI refers to human dignity, freedom, equality and participation as ‘fundamental rights to which every member of the human community may lay claim’ (OA 1971:22).

In CST terms, the ‘profound significance’ of cultural needs, aspirations, rights and forms of expression recognises cultural norms as the basis of human dignity and mutual respect (CIV 2009:26). Institutions, structures and policy decisions which discriminate are anathema to the principles of CST. Such discrimination frequently has ethnic connotations and it often causes socio-economic disadvantage. This limits the ability of those affected to exercise personal agency through the kinds of choices that authentic human development requires. Freedom and access to basic resources are both necessary for self-determination ‘in relation to life’s fundamental questions’ (ibid).

Pope John Paul II focused on international solidarity and equality among peoples as antidotes to social injustice. Among his regional ‘Ecclesia’ documents, *Ecclesia in Oceania* stressed the link between the impacts of colonisation on indigenous societies, dominance by settler cultures and marginalisation of original inhabitants. This document acknowledged that inadequate integration of later immigrants had created ‘dispossessed cultural group[s] struggling to maintain identity as they come in contact with secularised and urbanised Western societies...’ (EO 2000:6-7).

Today's realities fall well short of the CST ideal. While not fundamentally in conflict, solidarity and cultural pluralism are not easily aligned. Identity politics places greater emphasis on cultural difference than on our common humanity. Ethical uncertainty and relativism are endemic in our communities (*CIV 2009:26*). It is easier to agree to disagree, than it is to work together on tenable moral positions for current ethical debates. The potential exists for new forms of power sharing and resource devolution, however, which would safeguard the dignity of all members of society. This can be explored through CST, to further our progress towards just sustainability.

### **3.10 Stewardship of creation and sustainability**

The secular discourse on sustainability was explored in Chapter Two. This complementary section focuses on CST relative to the environment. Catholic Social Teaching has a traditional principle for environmental ethics and sustainability, namely 'stewardship of creation.' It is derived from the *Book of Genesis*, which states that God looked at the diversity and integrity of creation and 'saw that it was very good' (Genesis 1:31; USCCB 2002a). Today, the achievement of a justly sustainable consensus on priorities is a challenge. Even if we could agree in principle on the characteristics of a justly sustainable society, we would still disagree on the relative priority of economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns.

CST could exert more moral influence in the policy realm and provide more ethical guidance on sustainability than it has to date. There is magisterial provenance for doing so. In *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), written as evidence of environmental damage intensified, the anthropocentric CST view frames trade-offs between environmental protection and economic growth, in terms of their relative impacts on human development and self-actualisation.

Pope John Paul II explored the theme of resource exploitation in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), his first encyclical. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:34), the Pope emphasised the morality of natural resource usage: ‘We are subject not only to biological laws but to moral ones which cannot be violated with impunity.’ He cautioned that indiscriminate resource use and pollution are morally indefensible. In his *World Day of Peace Message* (1990:11) and in *Centesimus Annus* (1991:37) the Pope reiterated his concern for future generations, given the consumption-oriented self-absorption of this one.

In his *World Day of Peace Message 2010*, Pope Benedict XVI comments on environmental concerns. He links the morality of economic development with human responsibilities towards environmental protection and solidarity with future generations. In *Caritas in Veritate*, he comments also that: ‘Human beings interpret and shape the natural environment through culture, which in turn is given direction by the responsible use of freedom, in accordance with the dictates of the moral law’ (CIV 2009:47). This appears to be a normative statement rather than an indication of current realities. The Pope illustrates CST potential to focus national conversations and contribute to policies oriented to environmental and social justice, combined as just sustainability.

Environmental ethics concerns sustainable development and the relationship between humanity and the natural world. It entails a normative approach to resolving the conflicts engendered by diverse claims on natural resources. In the Pope’s view, it is ‘part of the natural moral law, which is the foundation of respect for the human person and creation’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2010:12). The sites in which CST might inform our journey towards justly sustainable outcomes for people and the earth are the economy, politics and the public policy system. The six CST principles pertaining to these domains are examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>i</sup> Social morality consists of criteria for shared values which guide individual and group choices on moral issues. As a set of normative principles governing how we should act towards one another, social morality enables us to communicate respectfully and coherently on moral issues (Sacks 2000:36). Its principles are valid for all time and in all situations as ‘norms inscribed on the heart of man’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2007b). They are passed from one generation to the next, by imitation and education as to the right thing to do. They are ‘the only secure base of freedom and equity’ (Sacks 2000:269) and repudiation of them leads to ethical relativism.

<sup>ii</sup> Summaries of the social encyclicals and other magisterial documents are available at Appendix One.

<sup>iii</sup> An earlier document ‘Market Economy and Ethics’ (Ratzinger 1985) indicates the origins of the Pope’s approach to social and economic issues in the light of human development and the common good. He stresses (1985:2) that ‘market rules function only when a moral consensus exists and sustains them.’ CST defines the structure of this moral foundation, but tension exists between its principles and the present-day market realities of individualism, competitiveness and consumerism.

<sup>iv</sup> Natural law is a cosmological approach that affirms the existence of moral absolutes rather than selectively contextualised applications of morality. It offers normative statements about the place of people in society and in the natural world and it provides norms for the proper role of government. In his *Summa Theologiae*, the scholastic theologian St Thomas Aquinas synthesised the thinking of Aristotle and the prophets to develop principles of virtuous living. See Sigmund’s (1988) introduction and some of the edited interpretations; also see Smithies (1994:154-7) on the components of ‘true moral knowledge’. Natural law establishes a normative framework for society and government.

<sup>v</sup> Biblical references in this thesis are sourced to the New American Bible, published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB 2002a) and accessed from the Vatican website.

<sup>vi</sup> Patristic social thought comprises the writings of the ‘Fathers of the Church’ and spans the period from when the New Testament was written, to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. From commentary on the Bible, it developed into broad guidance about the ethics of the social, political and economic concerns of the time. Foremost among these theologians was St Augustine of Hippo (Smithies 2003a:32-4).

<sup>vii</sup> Scholasticism is the body of thinking contributed by medieval theologians, in particular St Thomas Aquinas. It was based on Aristotle’s idea of a link between faith and reason and Plato’s concept of the Great Chain of Being – a hierarchical and orderly world. Aquinas developed ‘an integrated theory of law and government’ (Sigmund 1988:xxi). Also see ‘natural law’ above. Neo-scholasticism is the term given to the writings of Thomist adherents such as Pope Leo XIII (*Libertas Praestantissimum* 1888 and *Rerum Novarum* 1891), Pope Pius XI (*Quadragesimo Anno* 1931), and Maritain who applied Thomist thinking to democracy and human rights (Sigmund 1988; Maritain 1950a:204-211).

<sup>viii</sup> Middle axioms are moral guidance statements which explain abstract principles. In CST they are used in Bishops’ Pastoral Statements to connect the guidance in the Social Encyclicals with real-life issues and dilemmas in dioceses, parishes and local communities. See Massaro (1997, 1998) for examples of CST middle axioms applied to the United States welfare system and the NZ Conference of Catholic Bishops (2008b) and Caritas websites for local examples (Beech 2008).

## Chapter Four

### Catholic Social Teaching and tomorrow's solutions

While today's concerns for just sustainability lie in our social and environmental settings, solutions to these concerns must be found in the political economy. Six CST principles concerning the need for economic justice, the ethical status of private property, employment, the role of government, capability-building for social participation and the relationship between peace and sustainable development are now examined.

In this chapter, the Magisterium which supplies broad moral principles is again augmented by Bishops' Pastoral Statements which provide middle axioms or mediating statements for local application. Academic and theological commentaries also ground the CST principles in reality and identify areas requiring detailed technical analysis or reality checking. This chapter includes a brief overview of the left- and right-wing strands of argument common to the CST discourse and the major political ideologies.

In *Centesimus Annus* (1991:43) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:8) the Church makes it clear that its role is to provide moral guidance. While seeking to reorient society and the economy to the common good, it does not endorse any specific political or economic approach, nor does it propose policy models for implementation. Policy design is not its area of expertise, but moral theology is (*CIV* 2009:56). This implies that once the Church has specified its preferred social and environmental justice outcomes, it is up to government ministers and policy developers to decide whether to use its guidance to incorporate an ethical approach in terms of the guidance offered, or to develop policy independently of faith-based moral reference points. The diverse ways in which this choice can be, and is, exercised generate important arguments throughout this thesis.

The economic emphasis for CST is on the links between private property, businesses, markets and government, and their shared responsibility to create economic settings where each member of society can fulfil his or her potential. Pope Benedict XVI teaches that authentic human ‘development is impossible without ... politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good’ (*CIV* 2009:71). The following six CST principles identify the moral dimensions of the political economy itself, and those of the choices made by those who wield power within it.

#### **4.1 The moral imperative of economic justice**

The first of these principles is economic justice. As a key driver for social and environmental justice, it relates specifically to wealth distribution<sup>i</sup>. A statement of the guiding principles for fair distribution, from the social justice perspective characteristic of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences, is found in *Economic Justice for All* (USCCB 1986). This document provides norms for decision-makers. Its concerns have clear implications for policy:

The pursuit of economic justice takes believers into the public arena, testing the policies of government by the principles of our teaching ... We are called to shape a constituency of conscience, measuring every policy by how it touches the least, the last and the left-out among us (USCCB 1986:27).

The key themes of *Economic Justice for All* include human dignity, participation, the option for the poor, human rights, society’s responsibilities to persons and a commitment to full employment. It cites the need for policies to be evaluated regarding their effects on families, assistance for Third World countries, workers’ rights, subsidiarity and equal opportunity. The pastoral statement was written with a view to ‘testing the policies of

government by the principles of our teaching' (USCCB 1986:19). Its key insight remains relevant today:

'Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do *for* people? What does it do *to* people? And how do people *participate* in it? (USCCB 1986:21).

In *Centesimus Annus* (1991), Pope John Paul II identified ethical tensions in the economic system 'between social justice and efficiency, labour and capital, full employment and the control of inflation' (Vallely 1998:17). Section 42 of *Centesimus Annus* was significant for its teaching on the costs and benefits of capitalism and the apparent contradictions embedded within its text. Different aspects of the encyclical have been cited by left- and right-wing Catholic authors as validating their views on capitalist economic policy development and business practice:

If by 'capitalism' is meant an economic system which recognizes the positive and fundamental role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative... But if by 'capitalism' is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality ... then the reply is certainly negative (CA 1991:42).

This teaching suggests that the free market is positive if all have equitable access to it. In CST, utilitarian and individualistic forms of capitalism are not conducive to human well-being (Baum 1989:76). Neo-liberalism is singled out for Papal criticism, because of its stance that the market is free of all moral constraint and because: 'Economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples' (Pope John Paul II 1990:7).

Neo-liberalism is viewed in the social encyclicals as competitive rather than socially collaborative, restricting its benefits to the wealthy few. Poor people are disenfranchised from participation in this type of economy (CA 1991:32; EA 1999:56). The Pope stresses the individualistic aspects of an ‘all-consuming desire for profit’ and a ‘thirst for power,’ condemning them as the main causes of ‘structural sin’ (SRS 1987:37; CA 1991:35). Pope Benedict, likewise, notes that: ‘Grave imbalances are produced when economic action conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution’ (CIV 2009:36).

As the United States bishops affirm, ‘The moral test of our society is how the poor, the weak and the vulnerable are faring. And by this standard we are falling well short’ (USCCB 1996b:5). This failure persists worldwide in the first decade of the new millennium. In *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:45), Pope Benedict XVI details the impacts of unethical economic practices, in the context of the 2008-09 global economic recession. He calls for the application of a ‘people-centred’ ethical framework, based on solidarity and altruism, with unconditional gift and reciprocity taking priority over transactionalism and profiteering (Hart 2009). This would go some way towards retrieval of our ‘ordered universe and common heritage,’ as Pope John Paul II (1990:9) had previously advocated.

In response to recent work by Sandel on justice as ‘the right thing to do,’ Massaro describes Sandel’s justice framework as ‘thin’ and offers four Catholic principles that could augment the secular discourse:

1. Some things are simply not for sale.
2. Some actions are simply not permissible, regardless of material gains that might accrue from them.
3. Concern for the desperately poor should take priority over further privileges for the wealthy; and



4. Notions of consent, merit and autonomy (which dominate standard philosophical accounts of the meaning of justice) do not exhaust the whole human story' (Massaro 2010:2-3).

These four principles repudiate a 'lowest common denominator' approach to consensus on justice (ibid:2). They counter a view, held by prominent right-wing CST commentators such as Novak (1991, 2003a, 2009a) and reflected in many western political ideologies and economic policies, that wealth aggregation by individuals is a morally worthy goal in itself, irrespective of whether its benefits are shared equitably as 'gift' (CIV 2009:34).

#### **4.2 The universal destination of public and private goods**

Following Genesis, Aristotle, Aquinas and the social encyclicals, the Catechism of the Catholic Church advises that: 'Appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge' (Ratzinger 1998:2402). Similarly, the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution* (GS 1965) states that:

Private property or some ownership of external goods affords each person the scope needed for personal and family autonomy, and should be regarded as an extension of human freedom ... private property also has a social function which is based on the law of the common purpose of goods (GS 1965:71; also see CA 1991:30 and CIV 2009:40-42).

Charles (1999:67), citing *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931:49), *Mater et Magistra* (1961:106-9), and *Laborem Exercens* (1981:14), affirms CST with his comment that 'Private property is actually a positive moral good, if honestly gained and properly used.' The CST documents endorse private property as a buffer against collective ownership under socialism, or state ownership

under communism. There is a concern, however, that extensive property and business ownership give power to individuals at the expense of the majority (USCCB 1986:54; Sigmund 1988:184). In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) Pope John Paul II captures the relationship between the private property right and its corresponding responsibility to society:

The goods of this world are originally meant for all. The right to private property is valid and necessary ... private property, in fact, is under a “social mortgage” which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of material goods’ (*SRS* 1987:42).

Most CST commentators interpret the moral status of private property as something that ensures economic viability and a good standard of living for its owners and their families. The left-wing CST view endorses this, but with a proviso that it is morally compromising to accumulate it for its own sake. Right-wing commentators, on the other hand, claim that without wealth creation there can be no wealth distribution and that wealth itself is morally neutral.

As indicated above, *Centesimus Annus* (1991:42) may have been ambivalent on this issue, but in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), Pope Benedict dealt with it by refusing to engage in left/ right political debate as he postulated an ethics-based economy based on the core CST principles: “The market is not, and must not become, the place where the strong subdue the weak’ (*CIV* 2009:36). Sections 4.5 and 4.7 (below) elucidate the Pope’s perspective.

From the CST point of view, while there are people who lack the essentials for a dignified existence, there remains, on those who are more fortunate, a moral responsibility to share their resources (*SRS* 1987:42; *CIV* 2009:21-22, 38). Sooner or later, according to CST, it is time to share the benefits of one’s good fortune, through ‘a logic of gift’ (*CIV* 2009:34). From a CST

standpoint, this moral requirement for personal reciprocity should be replicated in our institutional systems.

### **4.3 The dignity of work and the rights of workers**

Working conditions in the latter part of the nineteenth century provided the context for *Rerum Novarum* (1891) which initiated an enduring CST debate about social justice. The principles espoused in this encyclical remain valid today (Weigel 2001:xxiv; Smithies 1994:152). All the authors of social encyclicals acknowledge *Rerum Novarum* as the foundation for reflection and guidance on the place of work for human development and on the need for workers to receive wages to support those who depend on them (Duncan 1991; Coleman 1991; Novak 1993; Massaro 1998, 2001; Charles 1999; McKenna 2002; de Berri, Hug *et al* 2003; Malinvaud and Archer 2003).

The morality and dignity of work suggest the presence of important links between the right to employment, decent working conditions, job availability, fair wages, the place of worker associations, unemployment, access to education and skills development, welfare dependency, government roles, income security, poverty and social injustice. CST has unequivocal positions on each of these areas of labour market and social development policy and the relationships between them.<sup>ii</sup>

One of the key principles espoused in *Rerum Novarum* (1891:20) was the payment of a wage that recognised the value of a worker's contributions, acknowledged his personal dignity and was sufficient to maintain a family. In *Centesimus Annus* (1991:15) the Pope teaches that the balance to be struck when assessing a just wage links the value of the work performed, the amount the worker needs to sustain the family and the ability of the business to pay. It is important not to compromise the financial viability of the firm itself, on which jobs depend.

A key Magisterial reference concerning human work is Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981). *Centesimus Annus* (1991) updates some of the insights in *Laborem Exercens* in the light of rapid global economic and technological change during the 1980s. The *Social Agenda* (PCJP 2000) provides useful access to other key items of Magisterial teaching. *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:25) brings the CST position on work completely up-to-date with assertions about the need to avoid 'economic marginalisation' caused by unemployment and to value people as 'the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life.'

Malinvaud and Archer's *Work and Human Fulfillment* (2003), published by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, treats fully the application of the CST 'dignity of work' principle, in a global economy characterised by labour surpluses, jobless growth, vast gaps between rich and poor, and low wages. Massaro's work (1998; 2000) identifies the public policy issues regarding access to employment, family responsibilities and the need for a realistic state-provided safety net when jobs are scarce.

A dominant theme in the CST literature on work is the moral requirement of government to stimulate the economy so that jobs are available for all who want to work. Full employment reduces the incidence of poverty, which affects families with children (Dorr 1992; Windley-Daoust 2001:180-1)<sup>iii</sup>. A controversial aspect of the more recent CST guidance is that businesses have a moral responsibility to create jobs. As Pope Benedict XVI teaches:

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require ... that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner, and that we ... prioritise the goal of access to steady employment for everyone (*CIV* 2009:32).

CST holds that ‘work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth’ (CA 1981:4; CIV 2009:63). Its contribution to community well-being complements its centrality for a person’s own authentic development. A job is central to a person’s identity and human dignity because it values his or her creativity and skills. It identifies a social contribution, directly through service provision or the supply of material goods, and indirectly as a source of government revenue for equitable redistribution. The link between this fundamental CST principle, today’s labour markets and the employment policy domain is that government policy should ensure opportunities for all people to embark on their own spiritual quest for self-realisation, through the choices they make at work (Novak 1993:84).

In *Laborem Exercens* (1981) the Pope reaffirmed the CST principle that labour has priority over capital; meaning that people are more important than profits and work should serve the interests of the employees, not the other way round. The encyclical differentiates between the subjective and objective dimensions of work (LE 1981:4-6), asserting that the subject of work is the person doing it, while its object is the service or range of goods produced as a result. The ethical implications of this stance are explored in CST commentary, by Baum (1986:234); Gregg (1999:99-102); Charles (1999:65); Curran (2002:205); McGovern (2003:9) and Brumley (2006:10). *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:35) makes it clear that ‘It is ... erroneous to hold that the market economy has an inbuilt need for a quota of poverty and underdevelopment in order to function at its best.’ People have the right and the duty to work.

### *Unemployment and the right to work*

The social encyclicals place authentic human development and the dignity of work at the centre of Catholic social thought. Unemployed people are cut off from basic human rights and opportunities to develop their potential and contribute to the common good. *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Centesimus*

*Annus* (1991) both evince ‘concern with the scandal of unemployment and accompanying social marginalisation’ (Archer 2003:27). In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II again affirms the CST position on the right to work. If some members of a community are out of work, the wellbeing of the whole community is compromised:

The obligation to earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace (CA 1991:43).

As far as CST is concerned, the goal of employment policy should be full employment. The New Zealand Bishops emphasise that government should provide a stable macroeconomic environment, to encourage businesses to create and sustain jobs (NZCCB 2008a). A ‘full employment’ focus in an economic downturn provides impetus for the policy framework to revert to a Keynesian economic model, which is compatible with CST. This model usually means investment in the public sector to provide employment there, or state investment in infrastructure provision to create jobs through construction and upgrading of public facilities. Furthermore, the model requires adequate payment levels of social security, to sustain an acceptable living standard for unemployed people when market-led options have failed (Keynes 1965; Dalziel and Lattimore 2004).

The National-led government, which assumed power in 2008 as the full impacts of the economic downturn were unfolding, has taken steps to increase public expenditure on roads, schools and state housing maintenance, to create jobs in the construction industry (Key 2008, 2009). Despite this, unemployment levels have risen sharply, generating public debate as to the respective roles of government, business and communities in alleviating it (NZCCSS 2009a, 2009b).

### *Working conditions and the right of association*

CST concerned itself initially with physical working conditions and fair wages, as the sources of injustice (*RN* 1891). Progressively the areas of CST concern expanded, to include the contractual relationship between the owners of the means of production and their workers, the provision of safe workplaces and adequate rest breaks and holidays.<sup>iv</sup>

From *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) onwards, CST has affirmed the right of workers to have a say in the manner in which their workplaces operate, to protect their interests and dignity. CST states that the effects of unequal power relationship between employers and workers should be mitigated. Labour market policy and employment law should be framed with this objective in mind (*LE* 1981:14; Baum 1986:237; CBEW 1996:91-94; Charles 1999:81). *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:64) extends this thinking, with a suggestion that as an important mediating institution in society, trade unions should promote the interests of all workers, not just their own members.

Massaro views the Church's support for trade unions as 'controversial.' He attests to the human rights aspects of union membership, but suggests that some activities trade union activity (such as strikes) can be problematic, when captured by political agendas. Taking his cue from *Laborem Exercens* (1981a:20) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991:15), he believes that, on balance, it is better to have unions than not have them, because there is less likelihood of injustice with them in place (Massaro 2000a:140). This view represents a widely-held centre-left perspective. Right-wing commentators are more inclined to downplay the union contribution to just power relationships. With regard to the injustice of unemployment, the negotiating presence of trade unions does help to protect job security.

#### 4.4 Subsidiarity and the role of government

Catholic tradition focuses on ‘right relationships’ between society, politics and the economy (Pope John Paul II 2002:7; also see *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and *Spe Salvi* 2007). These relationships are the key to equitable decision-making. The CST principle of subsidiarity states that those directly affected by a course of action should make the relevant decisions. They should not be impeded by more powerful organisations. While special pleading and rent-seeking are always risks (Jordan 2008:241-3), local actors are likely to apply local knowledge and insight to arrive at more equitable conclusions than those emanating from remotely driven and less informed interventions. In the secular discourse, paralleling *Caritas in Veritate* on this point, it is suggested that new institutions are needed, to promote wellbeing through ‘mutuality, solidarity and citizenship’ (ibid:245).

As one of the defining principles of CST, subsidiarity offers a major contribution to public discourse on governance. It is based on the Catholic doctrine that humans have free will, making them responsible for their own decisions. If this responsibility is denied, then so is the moral freedom to which all are entitled by virtue of being human (Sigmund 1988:184; Massaro 2001:128-130). The key to effectively applied subsidiarity is the provision of help where needed (supplementation), but without control (Cameron 1994:55-6; Brumley 2006:4-5).

The concept of subsidiarity first appeared in the second social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Pope Pius XI reflected on the loss of ‘that rich social life which was once highly developed through associations of various kinds’ (QA 1931:78). He offered a governance principle, which, while framed during the Depression, remains applicable to all forms of hierarchical organisation – public or private, income-based or voluntary:



Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher organization what a lesser and subordinate organization can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them'

(*QA* 1931:79).

Pope John Paul II reaffirms this in *Centesimus Annus* (1991:48). His point is that powerful bodies should support smaller ones when needed for their viability, and coordinate their activities with others for the common good. Once a local organisation is able to operate independently, interventions from the more powerful entity should cease. With regard to government activity, Pope Benedict XVI describes subsidiarity as 'the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state' which might otherwise 'infringe upon freedom' by creating excessive dependency (*CIV* 2009:57-8). He calls for 'integrated welfare systems, with the active participation of private individuals and civil society' (ibid:60).

### *The locus of power and its governance implications*

Subsidiarity is relevant to government institutions, where power is certainly concentrated, but not always to greatest effect in terms of just sustainability. Papal guidance on power relationships is dispersed throughout the social encyclicals, especially in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Laborem Exercens* (1981). *Gaudium et Spes* (1965:75) spells out the Church's view of effective relationships within society. In *Veritatis Splendor* (1993:99-101), Pope John Paul II reiterates the CST principles concerning areas of injustice due to abuses of power in the political environment.

Central government agencies are not known for willingly relinquishing power (Massaro 2002:131-2). Because of this, the principle of subsidiarity is relevant to this research, since it concerns the processes and activities of government and its agencies. The maintenance of an appropriate balance for funding between national policies and local initiatives is important for developing and implementing public policy in a manner best suited to local community needs and aspirations. Central government agencies are inclined to forget this.

In his Pastoral Statement *Poverty in the USA and Catholic Social Teaching* Cardinal Bernardin cautions against structures that ‘absolve the state from fulfilling its social responsibilities’ (Bernardin 1985:5). CST affirms that there needs to be a diverse network of community organisations to limit government power by holding politicians and public officials to account for the justice of their actions, while they discharge with integrity the functions that are properly within their roles.

#### *Subsidiarity, scale and sustainability*

In the political arena, subsidiarity has an economic dimension because of the connection between political power and control of economic resources. Following Schumacher (1973), Ziman asks what the ideal size and scale is for an effective economy based on subsidiarity and how regional and local enterprises could be promoted and strengthened. He postulates an answer in layered political structures similar to the principal/ subsidiary company structure common in large corporations (Ziman 2003:66).

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI makes a similar point, advocating ‘dispersed political authority, effective on different levels’ namely ‘local, national and international’ (CIV 2009:41). He supports local solutions to address the concerns of authentic development, ‘carefully designed to

correspond to people's concrete lives' (ibid:47) and with the principle of community solidarity driving the application of subsidiarity (ibid:58).

The principle of subsidiarity has the potential for significant influence on policy-making, in the interests of just sustainability, if it were embedded in our expectations of government. At present, however, it is not a guiding principle in New Zealand's social analysis or its political power bases, despite the 'local solutions to local problems' catch-cry frequently heard in communities and in the local outposts of government agencies.

Government agencies vary widely in the extent to which they control or devolve responsibility and resourcing to local operational units. Ministers retain control over major sources of funding. Nevertheless, if political pressures created by systemic injustice were to force a reassessment of key decision-making roles and their location, then subsidiarity may come into its own. It could help to redefine the role of government and promote opportunities at all levels for contribution and influence in New Zealand society. As a design principle for policy development (see Chapter 16 fieldwork responses and Chapter 19 on new frameworks), it could be integrated into programmes delivered locally, involving community experts in policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation.

#### **4.5 Effective participation in civil and political processes**

As Novak (1991, 1993) demonstrates in his explanation of the relationship between 'economic, political and moral-cultural systems,' the economy and politics are inextricably linked. Along with the economy, therefore, the political setting is the other arena in which structural and policy remedies to injustice should be sought. There is a wealth of CST commentary on economic and political problems, as well as many papal, conciliar and

episcopal guidance principles to assist with developing remedies for social and environmental injustice.

CST thinking on the role of government and the moral status of politics came from Aquinas and the natural law tradition. Natural law is embedded in CST as a way of designing and evaluating power structures. It establishes a framework for society and government, based on ethical assumptions that have become central to CST (*SRS* 1987:15; *CA* 1991:48; *EA* 1999:56; *CIV* 2009:59; also see Sigmund 1978:184-5; Novak 1991:91; Weigel 2000:11; and Lenches 2001:40).

The ideal society envisaged by CST is described by Baum (1989:81) as: ‘an alternative concept of democracy;’ one which ‘allows the participation of all in the important decisions that affect their lives.’ Novak (1993:98) asserts in similar vein that: ‘Civil society is constituted by ... free persons associating themselves ... to accomplish their own social purposes.’ Connecting the CST principles of social participation and solidarity, Novak (1991:135) emphasises the relevance of the Catholic Church’s traditional support (*QA* 1931) for ‘intermediate associations’ and ‘mediating structures’ in society, to stimulate participation in, and moderation of the power of, government. As indicated in the foregoing comments on subsidiarity, this places an onus on government to work with third sector organisations in areas such as housing and employment, to ensure that public resources are leveraged for the common good.

#### *Encouraging participation to prevent marginalisation*

Social marginalisation due to economic inability to participate has become endemic in most Western societies, as the gap between rich and poor has widened. For Catholic Social Teaching, this represents a moral deficiency in human relationships; one which compromises people’s dignity and impedes

authentic development. Human communities and their governing bodies should eliminate systemic impediments to social participation and ensure that everyone has the economic means to engage in civic activity to the extent that they wish.

In *Centesimus Annus* (1991:35) Pope John Paul II refers to the need for ‘a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation.’ He is ambivalent about the moral status of the contemporary welfare state because of its risk of entrenching welfare dependency. He criticises the welfare state, believing that excessive intervention reduces people’s sense of personal agency and responsibility. Curran (2002:208) comments that ‘The most controversial passage in this encyclical concerns the welfare state... [in which] excesses or abuses have produced harsh criticism’ The Pope asserts that:

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the social assistance state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending (CA 1991:48).

Even when a government has goals for development which incorporate redistributive justice, its agencies can impede the realisation of such goals, through official decisions that predetermine outcomes, excessive controls and insensitive interactions with clients. The passage cited above is critical for the aims of this research, since the role, nature and extent of welfare provision has such profound influence on social justice. Pope Benedict XVI has recently noted a converse risk to that identified by his predecessor – namely that ‘A downsizing of social security systems’ and ‘cuts in social spending ... can leave citizens powerless’ as they grapple with relative poverty and diminished prospects in the face of adversity (CIV 2009:25).

Some of the tensions in the social participation and welfare debates are canvassed with expert interviewees in the fieldwork phase of this research project, as the impacts of housing policy and employment policy are explored. As Chapter 19 will indicate, the CST principles could be used to facilitate ethical assessment of respective rights, roles and responsibilities in this contentious field.

#### **4.6 Global and local development and peace**

With the advent of globalisation, CST positions on social and environmental justice have increased in relevance to the international community. Inequities are created by financial systems that favour the interests of powerful nations and trans-national enterprises over the rights of millions of poor people to equality and justice (Dorr 1992; Filochowski 1998; Massaro 2000a, 2001; *CIV* 2009:22, 27). The widening gaps between rich and poor within national communities, including New Zealand, reinforce those evident among nations (Gould 2008:36-8). In Pope Benedict's view, these gaps reflect a moral crisis which can be alleviated by ethical discernment and practices which promote solidarity among communities (*CIV* 2009).

Among the earlier magisterial documents, *Populorum Progressio* (1967:26) gets to grips effectively with the concerns of global development. In *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:11-12) Pope Benedict revisits the 1967 encyclical, applying Pope Paul VI's insights to the contemporary issues of globalisation and its effects on human development:

The truth of development consists in its completeness: if it does not involve the whole man and every man, it is not true development. This is the central message of *Populorum Progressio*, valid for today and for all time' (ibid:18).

Massaro suggests that Western societies have a ‘vague sense of guilt about living in a society that somehow benefits from the cheap labor and resources extracted from Third World nations,’ but they have no real sense of what to do about it. Western patterns of consumption are unaffected by concerns about exploitation of the Third World. Accordingly, one of the aims of CST is to ‘encourage a more humane society where the most vulnerable members are better protected from harm’ (Massaro 2000a:149).

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II introduces the notion of ‘structures of sin,’ referring to political and economic practices which impede human development. In particular he condemns ‘the all-consuming desire for profit,’ the thirst for power’ and ‘certain forms of modern imperialism’ (SRS 1987:36-7). These influences create systemic injustices, which compromise the well-being of the poor and powerless. In *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001:50) the Pope asks: ‘How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?’ How, indeed?

In his World Day of Peace Message 2010, Pope Benedict XVI (2010:9) offers suggestions, drawn from Aquinas, for remedying such injustices:

I would advocate the adoption of a model of development based on the centrality of the human person and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on the realization of our need for a changed lifestyle, and on prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today, in view of what might happen tomorrow.

For several reasons, the ‘peace and development’ CST principle matters for just sustainability within New Zealand. Firstly, we are part of the global human family (Mechmann 2000:74). If we remain silent in the face of injustice anywhere, the Magisterium teaches that we are complicit in it:

‘Whenever nature, and human beings in particular, are seen merely as products of chance, or an evolutionary determinism, our overall sense of responsibility wanes’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2008:7, 2010:2). Just sustainability is not achievable in isolation and there is a moral imperative expressed throughout CST for wealthier individuals, groups and societies to share resources with those less fortunate: ‘In the search for solutions to the current economic crisis, development aid for poor countries must be considered a valid means of creating wealth for all’ (CIV 2009:60).

This moral requirement is germane to New Zealand policy-making. By choosing to share resources, we can provide housing and jobs to those displaced by natural disaster. Our openness to doing so is a measure of attitudes to justice and solidarity within our own society. Our motivation for change should be a ‘quest for worldwide solidarity, inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2010:10).

#### **4.7 Critiques of Catholic Social Teaching**

Much of the CST moral guidance resonates with the ethical intuitions of all people. Nevertheless, interpretation of ethical principles and their translation into behavioural standards is vigorously contested. As a consequence, the meaning and applications of the CST principles have occasioned extensive critique, from Catholics, other Christians and those subscribing to different belief systems. Clarity about the principles, the issues they seek to resolve and the identification of gaps within CST itself is needed for an informed assessment of the potential of CST to influence public policy.

CST critique involves significant commentators and well-traversed themes. Leaving aside theological debate, diverse arguments germane to this thesis concern consistency, coherence, relevance and practicability of the CST



principles when applied in pluralist democracies such as New Zealand. Church leadership quality and engagement with society are critiqued descriptively and normatively in the literature, along with the extent to which the Church contributes to political discourse. The validity of CST responses to power, conflict and vested interest are energetically debated in academic settings, Catholic institutions and parts of the political economy.

‘Anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes,’ (*IM* 1971:40). The Church has a credibility dilemma involving ethical consistency between its social teachings and some of its own actions. Ellsberg captures this in his editorial comment about the need for ‘Church accountability to the standards of justice and freedom which it prescribes to the world at large’ (Baum and Ellsberg 1989:xiv; also see Coleman (1991); Dorr (1992); Vallely (1998) and Massaro (2001). Commentators such as these, who subscribe to CST, indicate a clear need for the Church to practise what it preaches with regard to gender equality, workers’ rights in its own organisations and greater participation in developing its teaching documents (Massaro 2001).

CST has periodically been criticised for being remote, abstract, idealistic, utopian and unrealistic. The ‘social analysis’ work of Holland and Henriot (1983) and the critiques of Hobgood (1989; 1991), Coston (1991), Elsbernd (1995), Vallely (1998), Curran (2002; 2003) and Gudorf (2003) show that CST needs incisive thinking, unequivocal norm referencing grounded in reality and well-informed practical guidance if it is to interact credibly with the political economy. This type of critique offers developmental opportunities for CST as its commentators get to grips with momentum generated by *Caritas in Veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009).

CST ‘trades’ on the durability of its principles and moral traditions. Several authors, such as Baum (1991), Duncan (1991) and Dorr (1992) contend,

however, that contemporary adherence to the ordered world of natural law risks CST being labelled anachronistic. The Church's organic, agrarian tradition sustained 'feudal social relationships within a stratified society' according to Hobgood (1991:227). Hollenbach (1979:89) notes 'the organic evolution of CST' and contrasts this with 'the clean lines of rigorous moral argument.' In *Living Justice*, Massaro (2000a:56) alludes to 'misplaced nostalgia' involving 'a distortion of the natural law tradition.' Pope Benedict XVI is aware of this debate and wrote *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) to update CST and bring it into dialogue with today's concerns, while reaffirming its core principles.

Massaro (2000a:56) asks rhetorically whether CST is self-contradictory and inconsistent, or flexible, fluid and adaptable. A case can be made either way. The fieldwork and implementation phases of this research suggest the later position, as Chapters 13, 18 and 19 will indicate. Hobgood (1991:227) is scathing about perceived ethical inconsistencies between espoused CST principles and discriminatory treatment of women, but she does acknowledge the 'communitarian sensibilities' of CST and 'the Church's engagement in helping marginalised people' (ibid).

Keywords in CST, each of which has public policy implications, include interdependency, altruism, reciprocity and mutuality. Because the subject-matter of CST is political, its principles are often invoked to demonstrate the ethics of conflicting political positions. This is not a reflection on the CST Magisterium itself, which is apolitical, but an indication of the extent to which generic principles can be conflated with contextualised applications, or as Zwick (1999) puts it, 'twisted' to suit particular agendas. The application task is to recognise what is being twisted and to what purpose.

To illustrate the above contention, some right-wing commentators, such as Novak (1991; 2001) and Gregg (1999) consider that not enough social

policy emphasis is placed on personal responsibility and that some pastoral interpretations of CST condone such abrogation. In their view, left-wing wealth distribution positions such as that taken by the United States Bishops (1986, 1996a, 1996b, 1999) infringe personal freedom. Coleman (1991), Vallely (1998) and Massaro (1998; 2000) offer the reverse perspective, emphasising the moral responsibility of government to foster fair resource distribution. Curran (2002:182) focuses on ‘solidarity, justice and the option for the poor,’ validating these planks of the CST tradition, while questioning whether they are wholly realistic in capitalist market economies.

The relevance of the above critiques for this research is the extent to which they demonstrate contestability of ideas in the public forum. In outlining the CST principles and their critiques, this research indicates the potential for CST to contribute to just sustainability and to challenge our political and institutional norms. It articulates an ethics-based dialogue between social theology and public policy, offering a way to assess formatively the ethical status of government decisions. The proponents of CST do not expect to do that unchallenged. The above critiques indicate the queries that CST currently stimulates, or is likely to generate, in the political sphere.

#### **4.8 Political perspectives and Catholic Social Teaching**

Because the CST Magisterium concerns itself with broad ethical principles rather than applications in the political economy (Massaro 2000:171), an interpretative pattern has developed in which theological, academic and political commentators of left-wing or right-wing persuasion select those aspects of Papal teaching which appear to support their particular views (Mirus 2009). This is not ideal, but it is inevitable in the public policy environment, so it must be dealt with. In its ‘human anthropology’ (Curran 2002) CST recognises both the inherent dignity of the human person as an *individual* and the *social* nature of people as manifest in collective

solidarity. The main threads of political discourse related to individuals and society are linked to the relevant aspects of CST in the section to follow.

Right-wing political theory holds that economic growth will benefit everyone by increasing the total economic output available for distribution according to contribution and effort. The theoretical foundation for this stance is Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974). Hayek and Friedman are its foremost economists. Its political systems and policy theorists include Niskanen (1971) and Buchanan (1975, 1991). Among Catholic writers, the main proponents are Novak (1991), Sirico (1998), Weigel (2000), Neuhaus (2003), Bandow (2003) and Gregg (1999; 2001).

Novak cites *Centesimus Annus* (1991) to support the moral rectitude of self-determining, rational individuals in a free and democratic society, relatively unconstrained by government policy or regulation. *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1991) and *Three in One: Essays on Democratic Capitalism 1976-2000* (Younkins (ed.) 2001) represent Novak's thinking on 'the relationship between individuals, society and the state, in its political, economic and moral-cultural dimensions' (Novak 1993). He wields considerable influence within right-wing Catholic discourse, but is criticised by philosophical opponents as misinterpreting CST by saying that 'Business is a moral virtue' and by claiming that CST is deficient in that it has 'Failed to develop a culture of wealth' (Zwick and Zwick 1999:3).

The British Institute of Economic Affairs has published a collection of right-wing CST views on the market economy (Booth 2007). Contributions include those from Gregg (2007:254-72) on the limited proper role of government; Sirico (2007:47-62) on replacing welfare with charity; and Woods (2007:91-110) who suggests that a statutory minimum wage does more social harm than good. The tenor of their arguments, congruent with that of Novak, is that CST requires sound economies and markets that

reward individual effort, to generate wealth available for a level of charitable distribution, without imposing (unjustly in their view) on the freedom and rights of those who earned it. There is no sense of a 'social mortgage' here.

The Catholic left-wing, conversely, takes its stance from the Church's tradition of social engagement. Personal liberty is important for authentic human development, but is constrained by the moral imperative to act for the common good rather than for individual gain. Civic participation by all is important. The state must take responsibility for distributing resources equitably, because people will not do this unless they have to.

The theoretical foundations for left-wing policy lie in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971/1999) and Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* (1983). Its economic theory derives from the work of Keynes (1936, 1965). Catholic bishops' conferences usually demonstrate left-wing leanings and there is extensive academic commentary in this vein. Catholic left-wing thinkers include Hollenbach (1979) Holland and Henriot (1983), Cort (1988), Coleman (1991), Dorr (1992), Mich (1998), Massaro (2000a), Curran (2002), the liberation theologians and recently, Goodman (2009) and Medaille (2009a).

The Church recognises that the free market is an effective mechanism for stimulating and channelling economic growth, but that it cannot be relied upon to deliver social and environmental justice. It was not designed to do that. As Pope John Paul II comments in *Centesimus Annus*: 'There are many human needs which find no place in the market' (CA 1991:34). In *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), Pope Benedict XVI endorses this perspective.

Right-wing CST emphasises people's personal freedom and the moral status of choice, while left-wing CST holds that unregulated markets do not

represent the needs and rights of poor people, who often cannot afford to participate in them. Government's role in redistributing public resources is politicised and controversial. Its measures are taxation, regulation, targeted service provision, subsidies and income transfers. These tools are used in all shades of political and economic management. As far as CST is concerned, its own moral principles are the paramount ethical criteria for decision-making. Beneath the umbrella of the CST principles, political differences related to specific policy choices are to be expected (Brumley 2006:8-9).

There is a third political perspective, absent from the New Zealand political economy except in Green Party thinking, but interesting in terms of its affinity with the Catholic view of the relationships between individuals, society and government. While it has both left-wing progressive and right-wing conservative adherents, its relational orientation may represent some potential for new thinking in this country. It is communitarianism.

Heywood defines communitarianism as 'the belief that the self or person is constituted through the community ... there are no unencumbered selves' (Heywood 2002:421). It is based on reciprocity, sharing and redistribution (Jordan 1996:164-5). Similarly, CST holds that people can realise their potential only in a social context, in communion with others (CA 1991:49; CIV 2009:54). Communitarianism 'emphasises the way in which individuals' values are shaped by their social context and highlights the importance of the individual's status as a member of a community' (Cheyne *et al* 2004:208; also see Byron 1998:181). The moral implications of communitarianism include shared understanding of the common good as the basis for all social interactions and a just balance between individual rights and social responsibilities (Etzioni 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 2001). Pope Benedict XVI's 'logic of gift' has similar connotations (CIV 2009:34).

While the social encyclicals necessarily steer clear of political partisanship, pluralism in political opinion matters for this research. Each Pope has repudiated moral relativism, while recognising that ethically sound, broadly acceptable norms must underpin policies and economic strategies. The CST perception of ‘common *good*’ has to link coherently with society’s understanding of ‘common *ground*,’ without compromising the core CST principles. Drawing the same distinction, Coleman (2005:539) suggests that:

Some common ground can be found between the modern Catholic notion of the common good and some modern liberal virtue theorists [such as Sandel] who do accept, albeit in a thin way, some notion of human flourishing [involving] ... public goods and institutional arrangements for the flourishing of a common citizenry.

As Chapters 11-16 demonstrate, the potential for such a link is canvassed with the research participants throughout the research fieldwork. In the meantime, our attention turns to the institutions which validate the place of Catholic Social Teaching in social, political and economic life.

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<sup>i</sup> Nineteenth-century CST influenced the development of a social theory for economic justice known as distributism. It suggested that, instead of property aggregation by a few large companies, an economy of small businesses would spread resources more justly among citizens, by giving everyone choices to work for themselves and own capital, rather than being dependent on large corporations or the state (Medaille 2009; Goodman 2009b).

<sup>ii</sup> Within the range of employment-related policy concerns, the focus for this research is on the alleviation of unemployment and the quality of service provided by government agencies to those who find themselves unemployed. Macroeconomic and detailed labour market analysis is outside the ambit of this project. See Chapter 7 for further explanation of the links between employment, labour market and economic policy.

<sup>iii</sup> In New Zealand, the Child Poverty Action Group has produced extensive reports on the impacts of poverty and parental unemployment on children's life prospects. Some are cited in Chapter 7 (see Johnson 2003; St John & Craig 2004; St John & Wynd 2008).

<sup>iv</sup> There are instances of successful CST-based alternatives to usual employment structures and relationships. One well-established example is the Mondragon Cooperative Congress. Established in Northern Spain sixty years ago by a Jesuit priest, it is a group of worker-owned cooperative businesses voluntarily linked in a cohesive community. It models the CST principles of human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation and the centrality of work, all oriented to the common good. It also demonstrates social, economic and environmental sustainability (Gilman 1983; Jones 2000; Smith 2003; Medaille 2009b).

While Mondragon has a European and communitarian setting, the model enacts moral principles that could be applied elsewhere. The problems that Father Arizmendiaretta and his associates addressed are universal, so aspects of their solutions might be as well.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Institutional links between CST and public policy**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify New Zealand institutions which connect the principles of CST and the public policy domain. To begin with, links between religion and politics generally, and between the church and state specifically, are canvassed. Institutions and events that have shaped the New Zealand church/state relationship are identified, with insights into the capacity of this relationship to spearhead an ethically driven approach to policy design and implementation in our secular liberal democracy.

This material leads into an overview of CST in the Catholic school system, which is an institutional seedbed for the development of morally, socially and environmentally aware citizens and future leaders. Catholic schools form a significant part of the relationship between church and state in this country. Education for social contribution is, likewise, a significant part of the Catholic religious studies curriculum.

#### **5.1 Church/ State relationships in New Zealand**

In the principles espoused by today's political parties, moral positions based on religious beliefs are occasionally apparent but seldom expressed (Ahdar 2001:86-9). Depending on the extent to which these principles find electoral favour and are adopted by parties in government, opportunities may arise for influencing policy decisions. CST principles are inherent in policies which 'favour an active role for the state in the redistribution of income and ensuring that citizens have access to appropriate educational, health and social services' (Boston 2000:108). As Pope Benedict XVI has lately observed: 'The Church's social doctrine came into being in order to claim

“citizenship status” for the Christian religion’ (CIV 2009:56). This research canvasses the implications of such status for public policy-making in this country.

*The magisterial perspective on church and state relationships*

The Second Vatican Council examined existing links between the Church and governments, in the light of a tradition which harked back to the medieval ideal of a state based on a Catholic world view. The Reformation and the Enlightenment destroyed that assumption, so the Church needed to engage with pluralism and deal with secularism, or risk irrelevance. The Vatican Council documents *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) and *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) confronted this issue and provided future-focused guidance.

*Gaudium et Spes* identified the links between religion, society and politics, and between the church and government. It is the Catholic Church’s most authoritative statement on these issues. It comments on ways for the church and government to work together for mutually beneficial ends: ‘The Council now sets forth certain general principles for the proper fostering of this mutual exchange and assistance in concerns ... common to the world and the Church’ (GS 1965:40). Mutual benefits relate to ‘the attainment of the common good’ through combinations of religious observance and ethical standards of conduct in civil society (ibid:73).

The *Pastoral Constitution* (GS 1965) also distinguishes between spiritual and moral concerns which are the responsibility of the Church, and temporal and governance matters which belong in the political arena. While each has its own sphere of influence and should not force compliance or make decisions outside its jurisdiction, there are synergistic opportunities: ‘The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other [but] the more that both foster sounder

cooperation between themselves ... the more effective will their service be exercised for the good of all' (ibid:76).

Separation of church and state does not mean separation of the church from the concerns of society (Courtney Murray 1960; Boston and Cameron 1994; Ahdar and Stenhouse 2000; USCCB 2003a; Brumley 2006). The extent of its influence is debatable, but its potential to provide ethical signposts is apparent. In this context, Hehir (1991:62) suggests that:

The right and competence of the church to speak and act is less contested than a century ago. The moral principles the church invokes and the conclusions drawn from them often are contested. But this debate has less to do with right and competence than with how the Catholic moral vision engages major social issues of the day.

The church's engagement with its members as voters indicates its ability, where ideas are contestable, to influence political systems and public policy decision-making. Cardinal Pell notes the need for the church to understand 'the separation of powers, the benign separation of church and state [and] the politics of persuasion', bearing in mind that 'in a democracy, you have to be prepared to let the majority decide against you' (Pell 1999:12). As Watts (2009) put it in an interview with Michael Sandel:

Catholic Social Teaching has a valuable contribution to make to political debates. But the Church needs to understand that it's not enough simply to state its position and expect everyone else to fall in line.

A key question for the Catholic social tradition is how to make CST very persuasive, and a related question for this research is how to ensure that moral choices are foremost when social policy is being designed.

*Background to the church/state relationship in New Zealand today*

British, French and Dutch explorers, traders and missionaries brought their cultures and religions to New Zealand and inculcated them in the Maori population as part of the colonisation process. The British achieved political control over the new colony, but a state religion was never established here. The Catholic and Anglican faiths gained acceptance early on, followed by other forms of Christianity as colonial settlement began in earnest.

A ‘critical mass of settlers demanded the subordination of church to state [through] privatized Christianity and secularised politics’ (Stenhouse 2000:12). New Zealand is officially a secular state, but its Christian heritage remains evident in its political, legal and social systems. It has a tradition of religious tolerance, with freedom of religion in the private domain protected by human rights legislation. Our history includes contributions by religious organisations to charitable social services, such as hospitals, housing, caring for the aged and prisoner rehabilitation. Successive waves of immigration have brought increased cultural and religious diversity.

In considering the relationship between ‘God and Government’ in New Zealand, Ahdar identifies three kinds of Christian state. He mentions firstly ‘a theocracy ... where the state machinery serves religious goals;’ a second type ‘where there is form but not substance,’ implying lip service to Christian values in law and policy; and a third type ‘where there is the substance but not the form... [where] the core principles and ideals of Christianity are present without ... entrenchment of Christianity *per se* as the national religion’ (Ahdar 2000:59). He reflects on New Zealand as a secular state, neutral and non-religious but not irreligious; as a ‘type three Christian state’ where spiritual principles underpin social values, politics and structures, but without allegiance to any particular religion (ibid:63).

Ahdar suggests that his ‘type three’ prevailed until the 1960s. From that time, the erosion of Christian principles became apparent in government policy decision-making and in the wider community (ibid:64). Each faith group had been sectarian in its approach until the 1960s. In the absence of consensus, society looked elsewhere for coherence and church attendance began to decline. Ecumenism in New Zealand during the 1970s was a response to declining engagement in Christian church practice, combined with increasing pluralism and cultural diversity.

While there is no likelihood of New Zealand ever acquiring a state religion (ibid:68), some official religions in Europe demonstrate adherence to principles which could apply here. Ahdar makes a link between Christian Democratic parties and CST, noting the principles common to both (ibid:108; also see Cort 1988). Courtney Murray’s (1960) seminal work on American politics and public moral theology demonstrates similar links, as Eastham (2006) explains.<sup>i</sup> The connections between the CST principles representing public morality and the ethical concerns of public policy are fundamental to this research. The application of CST principles in the public domain would create a closer relationship between politics and traditional religious ethics, if not between church and state in the formal sense.

#### *Milestones in the New Zealand church/state relationship*

At the beginning of the 1993 election year, the leaders of the major churches in New Zealand voiced their concerns on political choices made in the 1991 Budget. Cuts to welfare benefits, market rents for state houses, contract-based employment legislation and the phasing out of direct provision by government of social services combined to create widespread hardship and social injustice. Assertive advocacy had not been a feature of the church sector which, despite its mandate to lobby politically for poor people, had

focused on voluntary services rather than policy input. The collective impacts of the 1991 policies on lower socio-economic groups with an ethnic component galvanized the churches into concerted action.

The New Zealand Bishops' Social Justice Initiative, *Making Choices: Social Justice for Our Times* (Smithies and Wilson 1993), with its commentary on the social aspects of public policy, was 'a first' in New Zealand. Churches were not known for this degree of unanimity on most issues (Boston 1994a:13). Boston notes the church leaders' 'agreement on the nature of social justice, and the representative responsibilities of individuals, families, voluntary organizations and the state' (ibid).

In their 1993 ecumenical Statement, the Bishops expressed their positions on subsidiarity and the role of government in housing policy, employment policy and other areas of social concern. In stressing the need for economic policies for job creation and to ensure adequate and affordable housing for all, the document reflected the CST principles. The church leaders also noted the influence upon it of the CST tradition (Boston 1994a:19).

The Social Justice Initiative stimulated debate, both about the policy drivers that it advocated, and about the role of churches in commenting on public policy (Boston 1994a:18-21; Cameron 1994:37; Marshall 1994:107; Ahdar 2000:68). It enabled people to consider whether theology has a role in policy development. While the church leaders focused on ethical principles and 'middle axioms' rather than policy prescriptions, the document was heavily criticised, mainly because moral theology had never featured in political discourse in New Zealand. The document was 'non-partisan' but the criticism on social justice grounds of neo-liberal monetarist policy settings and Treasury advice to government was obvious (Boston 1994a:25).

The *Social Justice Statement* was criticised as being too generic in its analysis, for failing to provide explicit policy guidance and for taking insufficient cognisance of the place of personal responsibility for one's own actions and decisions (ibid:21-5; Marshall 1994:107). The government of the day chose to ignore it. Yet disadvantage among vulnerable groups could not be ignored indefinitely. Having initiated debate, the churches continued with advocacy for humane policy prescriptions, challenging a 'Wellington worldview' which 'refuse[d] to be tied to a timeless, absolute moral code such as that provided by some religions' (Ahdar 2001:89).

The Catholic Office for Social Justice (now Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand) worked with the New Zealand Catholic Bishops in 1997 to produce *Church in the World* (Orsman and Zwart (eds) 1997), a collation of their social justice statements issued between 1979 and 1997. The connection between church and state is explicit here, as Cardinal Williams' foreword states:

These letters and statements are a clear indication that the Catholic Bishops in New Zealand do, indeed, have something to say on social matters. Catholic Social Teaching is basically an application of the Church's moral theology to the ethical questions raised by human societies (Williams 1997:7).

The 1997 Statements illustrate CST-based positions on social engagement, education, employment, labour relations, housing, family life, immigration, and indigeneity. For this research, the statements on labour relations and employment, structural unemployment, the right to decent housing and the impacts of homelessness are particularly relevant. Full employment policies are advocated, in line with the CST stance on the dignity of work and its centrality to human dignity: 'We believe that a return to an economic objective of full, freely-chosen and sustainable employment ... is one of the most important tasks for us in the next decade' (Orsman and Zwart 1997:29).

In reflecting on poor communities where houses are unaffordable, cold and overcrowded, the Bishops made unequivocal statements about social justice applied to housing : ‘A society which does not address itself to providing homes for its people cannot call itself truly human’ (ibid:45). Responsibility for ensuring adequate housing provision is assigned to government, with the responsibility to ‘examine its policies and make changes in favour of the low-income earners in our society. Present policies favour those who do not need the help’ (ibid:47).

The government again chose to ignore the Bishops’ call for interventionist approaches to social policy, despite growing evidence of market-led policy failures. In 1998, frustration surfaced in the Hikoi of Hope (Ahdar and Stenhouse 2000:19). Many politicians reacted adversely to an Anglican Archbishop and former Governor-General claiming ‘Enough is enough’ in relation to policy. Neo-liberal and conservative politicians disagreed both with the message and the mode of delivery. Those of left-wing persuasion were concerned about what they saw as role confusion and unwarranted interference by the churches in the political and policy-making domain. Yet government was sufficiently influenced by this demonstration of public feeling about injustice that, after the Hikoi, the Prime Minister arranged regular meetings between Cabinet and the mainstream Christian churches. These meetings continued beyond the change of government in 1999, to enable continued sharing of perspectives on housing, employment, health, education and the elimination of poverty. The latest meeting of this type took place in April 2009 (NZCCSS 2009c)

In 2000, Ahdar and Stenhouse published the proceedings from a 1997 conference, based on the theme *God and Government*. Sir Paul Reeves had expressed his concern at this conference about ‘idolising the free market and callously disregarding the human costs of its reform and restructuring



programme' (Ahdar and Stenhouse 2000:3). The conference explored the church/ state relationship in New Zealand, with contributions from Cardinal Williams, academics Henare, Boston and Lineham, and Brother Patrick Lynch from the Catholic Education Office, among others. Participants viewed a strong and mutually supportive church/ state link as essential, because of the inter-dependency of the two institutions as significant forces in society. It was acknowledged by the participants, however, that wider New Zealand society saw the church as a minority interest with its focus in the private domain. Ahdar (2001:85-9) reinforced this thinking in his exposition of 'liberalism and the Wellington worldview.'

In today's setting, the onus remains on the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference, supported by Caritas, to insist that justice will not be achieved without public acceptance and implementation of the principles of CST, which can help ensure that 'right relationships' are maintained. In times of economic downturn, some renewed activity on the part of the Bishops is noticeable. Their statement on poverty, issued during Social Justice Week 2008, exemplifies this (NZCCB 2008b).

Each September, the Catholic Bishops and Caritas implement Social Justice Week, selecting a theme for parish and community focus, which is then promoted through press releases. Each theme reflects current public debate and political decisions. Teaching resources are produced for schools and parishes. The Social Justice Week booklets represent informative syntheses on each theme, drawing on social encyclicals, pastoral statements and key addresses by the Pope. Topics canvassed since 1996 include homelessness, employment, social inclusion, children's rights, cultural diversity, health, environmental justice, poverty and restorative justice.

The evolving relationship between the church and the state in New Zealand affects the extent to which citizens (including policy-makers and

government service providers) accept Christian social morality as a driver for both personal and organisational interactions. If the church is seen as irrelevant in our secular society, the task of applying its principles to social discourse and public policy formulation is difficult. This dilemma is central to the questions posed in this research. The moral principles themselves remain valid, but they need more emphasis in the relationships between government and our communities.

## **5.2 Catholic education for citizenship and social contribution**

This section of the research explores the links between Catholic Social Teaching in the adult world and the formative influences of the Catholic education system, in its role of preparing school students for effective citizenship. Catholic education is a seedbed for the development of CST as an ethical framework, since students are the civic leaders and social participants of the future (USCCB 1998a). Their influence will shape any role of CST in the policy system in years to come, so it is worthwhile to examine the nature of the social morality investment made in them now.

The research prompted the following questions: What values does Catholic education instill in its students? Why do many Catholics gravitate to careers and advocacy roles oriented to social justice? Is the development of a social justice ethic traceable to the core principles and culture within Catholicism, irrespective of the extent to which CST is taught formally? With regard to the adult world, what are the values that contribute to engaged citizenship? Do the values acquired in Catholic schools form a structure on which adult applications of CST can be superimposed, for citizens' later contributions to public governance and policy development?

### *The development of Catholic education in New Zealand*

New Zealand's first schools were established by Catholic and Anglican missionaries, as colonisation began. They focused initially on evangelizing Maori and then widened their scope to include settlers. The first Catholic school opened in 1841, for primary-aged children. As the Westminster form of government consolidated itself in the new colony, pressure came on for schooling to be removed from its religious context. 'Education was being demanded as a right of social citizenship in a developing democratic nation [and this] precipitated central state concerns to institute national, compulsory and universal arrangements' (Stephenson 2000:7).

The first Education Act was passed in 1877. It provided for publicly sourced education to be free, secular and compulsory, a pattern that has endured to this day. In response, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops decided to establish their own schools, adding to the primary schools already available for Catholics and developing secondary schooling from the 1880s onwards.

While the Catholic Bishops (for one hundred years) resisted the idea of integrating with the state system, fiscal realities and emergent opportunities persuaded them to do so during the 1970s.<sup>ii</sup> In 1973, the Church and the government agreed on six principles for the integration of Catholic schools into the state system. These were the right to teach the Catholic religion and customs; the retention of the Catholic special character in the school; the right to enrol Catholics as preference students; decision-making autonomy regarding their school property; the right to own their land, buildings and other facilities; and the right to charge fees (Sweetman 2002:45). These principles were considered 'essential to the character and integrity of the Catholic school system within a new partnership in the New Zealand school system' (ibid).

### *Impacts of Catholic schools' integration into the state school system*

In defining the contribution made to the New Zealand education system by the Catholic schools, Br Patrick Lynch, the chief executive of the Catholic Education Office, comments that 'there are still spirited public debates about the place of religious instruction in schools' and that 'parents demand choice in education ... security, quality, excellence, values-based teaching and cultural expression' (Lynch 2000:97). He endorses the positive effects of legislation<sup>iii</sup> which provided for faith-based schools to manage themselves through elected boards of trustees. New Zealand law supports Catholic aspirations for independent thinking in their schools, consistent with Church doctrine and moral theology, rather than the proprietors having to subscribe to secular values and philosophies.

The Catholic Education Office advises that in Auckland there has been a 35% increase in the proportion of students seeking a Catholic education over the past ten years.<sup>iv</sup> The heightened demand for Catholic education and its focus on social service, especially for marginalised people, engenders three questions for this research – what constitutes the value system that is the bedrock of Catholic education? How does it contribute to socially-aware, responsible and active citizenship? Why is it so sought-after?

### *Catholic education for citizenship and social contribution*

Values education is most certainly sought after and Catholic schools offer it. What does Catholic values-based education comprise? What do those who seek it expect it to achieve? As indicated in Chapter Three, CST views human nature as socially oriented and capable of spiritual transcendence. The enrolment priority of the Catholic schools is to serve the needs of all

Catholic students, with special concern for the authentic development of children in poor, disadvantaged and socially marginalised families.

The educational values identified by the Catholic Education Office are congruent with the principles and themes of CST. These principles are synthesised in the Pastoral Statement *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (USCCB 1998b). This document, which provides access to the complexities of CST in an easily-understood form, is the basis of many CST textbooks used in schools (Pennock 2000; Windley-Daoust 2001). It is often referred to in guidance information for Catholic schools and the wider faith community in New Zealand (Henare 1994; Smithies 2003a, 2003b).

As regards the ‘life and dignity of the human person’, and ‘authentic human development’, the schools focus on excellence and developing one’s full potential for service to the community; respect for the dignity and rights of each person; support for community enrichment through cultural diversity; valuing all contributions; valuing our heritage and living by the values and norms of Catholicism (SCCE 1997:3; USCCB 1998b; Pennock 2000:17-20; Windley-Daoust 2001:58; O’Donnell 2001:93, 159; NZCCB 2006b; NZCEO 2002a, 2002b, 2006).

The CST ‘call to family, community and participation’ and the concepts of ‘subsidiarity’ and the ‘common good’ elicit Catholic educational strategies such as: building community identity; a communitarian outlook; service to the community; the responsibility to participate in society; associating in community groups; promotion of just social, economic and political structures; taking leadership; making a positive difference in society and focusing on the common good (SCCE 1997:6; Pennock 2000:65-6, 77-8; Windley-Daoust 2001:59-60, 88-92; O’Donnell 2001:94-5).

The CST interpretation of ‘rights and responsibilities’ is addressed through: development of students as good citizens; taking personal responsibility and exercising self-control; showing respect; gaining respect; using freedom in a socially responsible way; showing tolerance and acceptance of people’s rights; being honest and demonstrating personal integrity (Pennock 2000:76; Windley-Daoust 2001:61-3, 90-3; O’Donnell 2001:223).

CST focuses on poor people as deserving of respect and empowerment to overcome their disadvantages, so that they may attain their highest human and spiritual potential. The ‘preferential option for the poor and vulnerable’ is represented in Catholic schools’ thinking in the following manner: caring for disadvantaged people; contributing time and other resources generously; respecting the rights of those who are disadvantaged; understanding the reasons for social inequality and making commitments to social justice (SCCE 1997:5; Pennock 2000:38-9, 46-7, 175-6; Windley-Daoust 2001:200-3, 204-9; O’Donnell 2001:157; NZCEO 2006).

Working conditions frame a key CST principle, namely ‘the dignity of work and the rights of workers.’ In the Catholic schools, adherence to this principle is reflected in expectations of diligence which the students must internalise; application to the task at hand; commitments to educational excellence and ambition to reach one’s greatest potential. The schools are expected by the Catholic community to provide an environment in which students can excel – academically and in their development as fully-realised persons, as responsible citizens and as active members of the Catholic faith community (Pennock 2000:229-30; Windley-Daoust 2001:176-84).

The CST principle of ‘solidarity’ is reflected in school values encompassing inclusiveness, valuing diverse viewpoints, working together, reciprocity, generosity, caring for each other and developing partnerships for mutual

achievement. The quality of interpersonal relationships is seen as important, as is the ability to work with a common sense of purpose (SCCE 1997:6; Pennock 2000:69-71; Windley-Daoust 2001:85-6; O'Donnell 2001:52).

'Care for God's creation' or the stewardship principle is gaining increased prominence in Catholic education as the sustainability discourse gathers momentum in CST and in society at large (Pennock 2000:250-56; Windley-Daoust 2001:267-9, 276-9). This parallels an increasing interest in eco-theology among religious congregations such as the Sisters of Mercy. The Pope canvasses sustainable development and environmental justice, among other key CST issues, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009: 48-51) and in his *World Day of Peace Message 2010*.

The CST link with education is important for assessing the contribution of the Catholic schooling system to the development of citizens who will work for the betterment of society and its governance. They are taught to 'learn and live justice' (Pennock 2000). There are high expectations of them as they leave the formal education system, to move into positions of political and economic contribution and influence. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education cites 'the Catholic school at the service of society.' It comments that 'the school cannot be considered separately from other educational institutions and must be related to the world of politics, economy, culture and society as a whole' (SCCE 1997:16).

This section of the research has examined the contribution of the Catholic education system to the development of engaged citizens and the formation of future leaders in the domains of social and environmental justice (USCCB 1998a; Hug 2009c). To explore the potential for CST to contribute to justly sustainable public policy, Catholic education experts are asked, as part of the research fieldwork, about the extent to which Catholic students find careers in the domains of social services, human rights, conservation

and justice. Current and potential CST influence on policy-making and political decisions is explored with interviewees, along with the efficacy of Catholic schools in embedding CST through their teaching programmes.

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<sup>i</sup> John Courtney Murray was an eminent Jesuit theologian who concerned himself with the application of CST to public policy, in order to raise community awareness and observance of natural law-based principles of social morality. In a series of essays, collated as *We Hold These Truths: Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960), he suggested that ‘One nation under God’ had been eroded by ‘modern rationalism’ and that society needed to engage in ‘a quest for unity-and-pluralism’ (Courtney Murray 1960:129). Civil society was integral to human nature, in his view, and not just a choice made in terms of a social contract (ibid:25). He saw Catholic schools as an integral part of the church/ state relationship (ibid:139-148). Courtney Murray posed a process of dialogue to find workable moral consensus in pluralist societies. Location of the ‘Catholic center’ would enable people to find ethical paths between policy options (Eastham 2006:5-7). Courtney Murray’s work informed Massaro’s research into the US welfare system (Massaro 1998; 2000).

<sup>ii</sup> Catholic schools in New Zealand were at risk of closure by 1970 because of funding and resourcing inadequacies. Following protracted negotiations with successive governments, the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (PSCIA) was passed in 1975, during a ‘brief window of opportunity provided by the Third Labour Government’ (Sweetman 2002:218). This Act guaranteed the rights of the faith-based schools to promote their spiritually based culture, value systems and moral codes, while treating the schools as part of the state system for agreed levels of resourcing from Vote: Education, provided they complied with the National Education Guidelines and maintained maximum school rolls to avoid depletion of student numbers from the state schooling system.

<sup>iii</sup> The Education Act 1989, passed in terms of a Labour government strategy ‘Tomorrow’s Schools,’ provided for the governance of all schools, including state integrated schools, to be undertaken by Boards of Trustees, elected by their local communities and accountable to the Minister of Education for school performance and management. Boards of integrated schools operate to ‘preserve and foster their special characteristics’ (Section 156 Education Act 1989). According to the Catholic Education Office, the access to state funding provided through Integration Agreements with school proprietors has generally worked well during the 34 years in which the PSCIA 1975 has been in place.

<sup>iv</sup> In 2003 Government began to review the PSCIA 1975, with a view to incorporating it in the Education Act 1989, ostensibly for ease of administration but in the Catholic view, for increased ministerial control. This issue remained unresolved at the time of the 2005 election and, to date, government has not revisited it. The Catholic Bishops remained adamant that they wanted the continuing focus and protection of the PSCIA rather than giving government the ability to close any of their schools. The Catholic education system remains intact, continuing to inculcate CST in the minds of its students as future leaders and social contributors.



## **Chapter Six**

### **The New Zealand public policy system**

My literature review has, so far, canvassed the nature of just sustainability as a desirable policy outcome, the contributions that Catholic Social Teaching could make towards its achievement, and the institutions that create links between social morality and ethical frameworks for policy-making. It is now time to explore the public policy system itself, to assess its potential for achieving just sustainability. Could public policy underpinned by an ethical foundation such as CST realise the outcome of just sustainability, by reducing, even removing, injustice as seen in unemployment, poverty, homelessness and environmental damage?

In this chapter, a representative range of literature and its influences on the policy system are considered. Systemic elements have been chosen for their relevance to the research proposition. They comprise major policy-making structures; economic and organisational theories; policy-making in practice; policy effectiveness; and governance influences on policy-making in New Zealand. Theoretical, philosophical and operational insight is drawn upon. Our policy paradigm comes from the political traditions of western democracies, similar to the way in which contemporary CST rests on traditions of moral theology as taught in the social encyclicals.

The following overview of policy theory and practice is needed as a context for the views expressed in the research fieldwork (Part 2 below). Established policy concepts influence the thinking of all the contributors to this project, in varying degrees. The material outlined below forms the baseline that all policy actors work with, or try to adapt, whether they are working within institutional parameters or trying to introduce new ideas or models.

## **6.1 Public policy structures**

Public policy represents the choices made by governments which attempt to deliver on political undertakings, through pursuing policy goals to address identified needs. While differing in their views on the scope of public policy, commentators such as Considine (1994), Hill (1997), Fenna (1998), Bridgman and Davis (2000), Howlett and Ramesh (2003), Shaw and Eichbaum (2005) Spicker (2006) and Jordan (2008) concur in its definition. These writers have drawn on Lasswell (1958), Simon (1957), Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963), Berger (1974) and Lipsky (1980) as seminal writers in public policy theory. Input from Weimer and Vining (1992; 1999) and Bardach (2000) includes systematic approaches to policy definition, cycles and analysis processes, which add clarity to the discourse.

Considine's definition introduces a systemic approach: 'A public policy is an action which employs government authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value' (Considine 1994:3). He amplifies this, to indicate policy origins, interdependencies and consequences: 'Policy is the continuing work done by groups of policy actors who use available public institutions to articulate and express the things they value' (ibid:4). Shaw and Eichbaum (2008:2) highlight the 'deeply political' nature of policy-making, citing the frequency of 'difficult and contentious choices over the scope, cost and design of policies.' They identify, as areas for public debate and potential conflict, the underlying values, perceived policy effectiveness and relationships between individuals and government in a democracy.

Resource allocation is fundamental to policy decision-making (Considine 1994:5; Bridgman and Davis 2000:10-11; Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:8-9). Each government has a perception of desirable public policy outcomes and

makes its resource allocation choices accordingly. This process is ‘rational,’ ‘intentional,’ ‘structured and orderly,’ ‘political in nature,’ ‘dynamic’ and ‘structured around objectives’ (Bridgman and Davis 2000:3). Public policy is always normative, in that it expresses what the government of the day believes should occur. It has an ethical dimension, especially apparent when some groups in society are disadvantaged through policy impacts. Berger (1974) identifies ethical dilemmas in policy-making, related to the prediction and assessment of policy impacts. These dilemmas are framed within a ‘calculus of pain’ (Berger 1974:163-5), a ‘calculus of meaning’ (ibid:193-4) and a ‘postulate of ignorance’ (ibid:151-3)<sup>i</sup>

### *The policy environment and key relationships*

The political and policy environment is characterised by ideological conflict and attempts at compromise when consensus among stakeholder interests is absent. In all policy decisions there are winners and losers. There are descriptively and normatively ethical dimensions in the patterns of who gains and who pays or loses as a result of such decisions. In accessing public resources, a key political dimension is the identification of ‘who has influence, who is excluded and who achieves what they want’ (Considine 1994:6), or as Lasswell originally expressed it in 1936, ‘Who gets what, when, how?’ (Lasswell 1958; Heywood 2002:11).

Considine (1994), Bridgman and Davis (1998), Fenna (1998), Shaw and Eichbaum (2005) and Hill (2005) agree on the interdependent relationships between the various actors and stakeholders in a policy system. Howlett and Ramesh (2003:65-84) identify the main policy actors as ‘elected officials,’ ‘appointed officials,’ ‘business actors,’ ‘organised labour,’ ‘the public,’ ‘think-tanks and research organizations,’ ‘political parties,’ ‘the mass media’ and ‘interest groups.’

The relative influence of these actors depends on the policy context, on their roles and on their ability to articulate issues convincingly to government, to secure placement on its policy agenda. It also depends on who within each of these groups is included in specific policy discussions, and why. 'One of the major [policy] questions is whose interests are being served and how effectively' (Fenna 1998:10). Policy debate which emphasises rationality tends to ignore normative elements and values, especially those pertaining to groups whose interests are sidelined or dismissed.

### *Values, power and influence in the policy system*

Questions of ethical drivers and whose interests are being served are related to the location and exercise of systemic power. In their examination of power and why it matters, Howlett and Ramesh (2003:68-71) note that one of the most influential elements is the bureaucracy, consisting of appointed officials who are responsible for developing and implementing public policy. Recurrent ethical tensions are 'managed pragmatically' (Bromell 2009:29). Bureaucrats work in hierarchical settings which demand visible compliance with organisational positions, rather than accommodating debate on social morality (Amy 1984:580).

Nevertheless, bureaucrats' own values, while not usually expressed openly, do influence policy directions. The role of bureaucrats is material to this research, in that their own unstated values, as well as organisational rules and consensus, affect policy recommendations made to government from within its institutions (Lipsky 1980; Considine 1994; Heywood 2002:363-4). While ethical tensions in policy-making are regarded as 'enduring, even natural,' (Bromell 2009:29), bureaucrats do make choices, as does anyone, where personal values conflict with organisational positions.

Mulgan (2004:233-5) and Shaw and Eichbaum (2008:147-55) offer useful perspectives on the place of political parties in a policy system. Through political manifestos, the political parties help voters evaluate options, by offering differentiated ideological approaches to economic and social issues:

Being on the left has usually been taken to imply support for greater equalisation of wealth and power and an active role for the state in economic management, while being on the right implies greater reliance on the private sector of the economy and a more limited role for the state (Mulgan 2004:244).

While proportional representation and the advent of new parties may have blurred some of the purist ideological boundaries, people want to know what they will be getting for their vote (Mulgan 2004:68-69; 278-9; McLeay 2006; Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:155). Citizens' trust in public institutions, and in the policy-making process itself, affects their engagement and participation. It represents a key issue for this research because of its impact on the credibility of policy-making, resource allocation and service delivery.

## **6.2 Theories of public policy**

Policy theory and practice are both concerned with the distribution of scarce resources through exercising government power. The public policy discourse has its antecedents in economics and political science. This indebtedness shows in its use of inductive and deductive analytical tools and in the theories and ideologies used to promote resourcing choices and outcomes that are economic, political, social and ecological in their impacts. There is an 'affinity between political ideologies and particular approaches to the organisation of economic activity' (Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:188). It is evident that: 'classical liberalism underpins neo-liberalism; conservatism has evolved into neo-conservatism; modern variants of social democracy

have their origins in socialism’ and the main point of difference in all these views is the relationship between the individual and the state (ibid). This relationship matters for this research. It is at the core of policy decisions which affect people individually and collectively.

Since policy analysts and government services work in a political world, the left: right polarity also matters for this research. Right-wing politicians say that governments ‘tax too much,’ ‘borrow too much,’ ‘spend too much,’ ‘regulate too much,’ and ‘do too much’ (Fenna 1998:38-9). Fenna notes that ‘this was the message of supply-side economics, the doctrine that displaced Keynesian thinking ... and lay at the heart of economic rationalism’ (ibid:39). Left-wing theorists take the opposite view of the relationship between people and government – that state intervention is needed, to deal with market failure and ensure equity when market forces do not.

Market failure refers to ‘a circumstance where the pursuit of private interest does not lead to an efficient use of society’s resources or a fair distribution of society’s goods’ (Weimer and Vining 1992:13). Unemployment, poverty and homelessness demonstrate market failure, in that supply and demand imbalances cause distributive distortions and resource wastage. Government failure relates to public policies with ‘intervention consequences that would inflict greater social costs than social benefits’ (Fenna 1998:49).

In connecting politics and economics, Shaw and Eichbaum (2005) have observed in the economy a tension between government and the open market, which parallels the tension between individuals and government in the political sphere. In common with Heywood (2002), Cheyne *et al* (2004, 2008) and Duncan (2004, 2007), they contrast the market-oriented focus of classical economics<sup>ii</sup> with the Keynesian managed-interventionist approach.

Monetarist theory, developed by Friedman (1980) and his associates of the 'Chicago School' and based on Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944/ 1994), drives neo-liberal economic policy (Duncan 2007:194-5). It suggests that inflation can be controlled by government's influence on the supply of money, since its plenitude or scarcity determines its cost as represented by interest rates. Inflationary demand reduces if money is tight and interest rates are high (Heywood 2002:50, 185; Duncan 2007:202-3). Monetarism is highly influential in New Zealand's economic policy decisions, affecting areas such as labour market supply and demand.

Keynesian economics<sup>iii</sup>, on the other hand, states that the cyclical nature of the economy creates imbalances between supply and demand (Keynes 1936, 1965). At cyclical low points, demand can be stimulated by government intervention, through increased spending on infrastructure, which creates new jobs. Keynesian economics supports the political objective of full employment, and requires active intervention on the part of government. This can involve economic policy that runs counter to the economic cycle, such as running budget deficits (Heywood 2002:184; Duncan 2007:101-2).

The Labour-led government (1999-2008) claimed that Third Way social democracy would alleviate poverty and alleviate impacts of 1990s neo-liberalism and monetarism, but expert commentary repudiates this claim (Kelsey 2002:60-2; 85-6). With a change to a centre-right government late in 2008, and the development of global recession, the political focus moved from Labour's belated recognition of the impacts of poverty, to National's focus on economic growth, reprioritised social policy objectives and public expenditure, and restoration of business confidence (Cook and Hughes 2009a; Stephens 2009; MSD 2009b, HNZA 2009b; NZ Treasury 2009).

Current economic and public policy approaches are influenced by their late 20<sup>th</sup> century antecedents. Political adherence to neo-liberal organisational

theories drove the New Zealand public sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, especially public or rational choice theory, new public management and agency theory. These theories remain significant for New Zealand policy development, because they survived changes of government from right-wing to 'third way' in 1999 and to centre-right in 2008. For the time being, they continue to influence levels of receptivity in government to new ideas, especially regarding challenges to orthodoxy.

### *Public or rational choice theory*

The core tenet of public choice theory is utilitarian (Heywood 2002:276). All the actors in a policy system are 'rational utility maximisers' who make decisions based on their own interests (Olson 1971; Hill 1997:34; Howlett and Ramesh 2003:22; Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:158; Duncan 2007:205). This theory is consistent with liberalism and free market economics, which assume the freedom and rights of individuals to increase their wealth. Rent-seeking and free-loading are predictable and tolerated in settings of deregulated competition (Olson 1971, 1982). Public choice theorists, according to Howlett and Ramesh (2003:23), stress freedom in their coverage of aspects such as voter behaviour (Downs 1957); decision-making (Coase 1960); institutions and bureaucracies (Downs 1967); public choice (Niskanen 1971, 1975, 1996); political parties (Riker 1962) and constitutions, ethics and self-interest (Buchanan 1975, 1986, 1991).

While public choice theory 'can obscure issues of power, subordination and discrimination' (Jordan 1996:12), it often forms a basis for policy decisions. Its economic rationality provides a clear structure for the analysis of options and the identification of policy trade-offs on the basis of efficiency (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:22). It does not consider policy impacts on vulnerable people and fails to take into account the ethical status of the outcomes reached. In its 'logic of collective action' (Olson 1971), it ignores social



impacts or environmental effects, unless they are identified and budgeted within policy proposals. It is ostensibly rational and neutral, but has an ethic attached to it, based on competitiveness, 'a largely covert moral agenda of its own' (Jordan 1996:19). In his assessment of public choice theory and free market economics through the lens of social justice, Jordan (ibid:52) comments that: 'Olson's analysis shows ... how the vulnerability of the poor lies in their exclusion from membership of rent-seeking, organised groups within a market economy.' In public choice theory, adverse impacts, including externalities, are for those affected to resolve for themselves.

### *New public management*

New public management (NPM) applies rational problem-solving and decision-making to the public sector (Shaw 1999:191-2). In the process of reform in New Zealand, business management techniques were transplanted into the public service, with varied levels of effectiveness. This was done because bureaucracy was seen as inefficient. Replacement by commercial management structures was expected to enhance process accountability and transparency (Boston *et al* 1996:4-5; Shaw 1999:191-2; Scott 2001:37-9; Lunt *et al* 2008:16-17; Whitcombe 2008).

Under NPM, outputs are supplied to government through purchase agreements, or contracts between the minister and the chief executive of the government agency (Boston *et al* 1996; Scott 2001:37-42; 170-8; Norman 2006). Contracts within the chief executive's authority are specific and short term, incorporating milestone monitoring and reporting. NPM was claimed to have increased public service efficiency but it has not always delivered outcomes that are socially and environmentally just (Shaw 1999; Kelsey 1997, 1999, 2002; Roper 2005; Lunt 2008; Poata-Smith 2008; O'Brien 2008; Caritas 2003a, 2008).

### *Agency theory*

Agency theory is a contractual business model. One party, the principal, enters into a contract with another party, the agent, who will deliver agreed goods and services under agreed conditions and at a specified cost. In New Zealand, public sector reformers assumed conflicts of interest in government agencies which exercised the principal and agency roles within their own ranks; between government agencies as agents and ministers as principals; and among agencies acquiring goods and services from each other. With such close transactions, moral hazard arose, in the view of agency theorists, through unclear accountability. Collusion or conflict between sections in government organisations was likely to prejudice the public good (Boston *et al* 1996:19-20; Scott 2001; Whitcombe 2008).

Accordingly, policy functions were removed from operational units such as Housing New Zealand. Yet the effectiveness of separated policy and service delivery did not prove superior to integrated direct provision by government agencies. There were perceptions that policy and servicing both declined in efficiency and lost integrity and coherence (Boston *et al* 1996:32-3; Scott 2001:85-90; Whitcombe 2008:12). Countering this perception, the view remains widespread, however, (Scott 2001:90-2) that state agencies should not concurrently fulfil policy-making, resource allocation, regulatory and provider roles due to conflicts of interest. Services on which vulnerable people depend are often compromised by this debate (Johnson 2007).

In the light of recent (2009) calls for greater efficiency and productivity in the public service, there have been suggestions that entail abandonment of the theories and structures of NPM. Cook and Hughes (2009b:56), for example, advocate an 'integrated value chain' approach to public services, with governance arrangements that 'replace the management tools and approaches introduced some 20 years ago.' If any political energy for

change could be broadened from ‘value for money’ to ‘value for people and the earth,’ then ethical considerations would penetrate the policy process. We might eventually see some progress towards just sustainability.

### **6.3 Public policy in practice**

Public policy responds to problems in the economy or society. Fenna (1998), Weimer and Vining (1999), Bardach (2000), Howlett and Ramesh (2003), Shaw and Eichbaum (2005; 2008) and the State Services Commission (1999a, 1999b) concur on the usual sequence of events leading to a policy decision under the rational problem-solving model, which is the one officials use most frequently. Process norms are entrenched in the policy system. Theory and practice combine to create resistance to change, especially when such change questions the validity of established norms.

#### *Policy cycles and development processes*

Considine (1994:189) outlines the policy development stages as: ‘Decision-making, planning, resource allocation, negotiation and motivation.’ These processes enable government to decide on goals and priorities, communicate these to key audiences, take action on the priorities, and monitor and review the manner in which the priorities drive the operations of relevant agencies (Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:21-6). The stages represent the points at which ethics-based thinking could be introduced into the policy system.

Bardach (2000:xiv) offers what he terms the ‘eightfold path,’ as a means of navigating possible solutions to a complex policy dilemma. His policy cycle is widely used. Its eight steps are ‘define the problem,’ ‘assemble evidence,’ ‘select criteria,’ ‘construct the options,’ ‘project the outcomes,’ ‘confront the

trade-offs,’ ‘decide’ and ‘tell the story.’ Bardach’s model treats all presenting issues as problems: ‘It often helps to think in terms of deficit and excess.’ As the problem-solving paradigm is so entrenched, problem resolution has become the prevailing objective for policy development and adaptation (Fenna 1998; Weimer and Vining 1999; SSC 1999a, 1999b; Bardach 2000; Bridgman and Davis 2000; Howlett and Ramesh 2003; Lunt *et al* 2003; Shaw and Eichbaum 2005). There are alternatives to this model, however, as Chapter 9 will demonstrate.

### *Policy instruments available to government*

Policy instruments or tools represent the means ‘to turn ideas into reality’ (Bridgman and Davis 2000:67). A particular policy tool might serve several purposes and have multiple effects – both good and bad. Several policy tools might be used in combination (Fenna 1998:8). It is unethical to pre-determine policy responses or to assume constant correlation between policy issues, potential solutions and combinations of tools. Each case should be assessed on its merits.

A key point is that, as intervention instruments, the tools are morally neutral, but their application and impacts have ethical components and ‘moral consequences’ (CIV 2009:37). According to a prominent CST author, many social justice theorists, including Rawls (1971) and Dworkin (1985), endorse policy neutrality, based on a ‘conception of the good of unencumbered agents, privileging choice over commitments or tradition’ (Coleman 2005:537). Ethical analysis needs to inform the use of policy tools, to eliminate ‘the kind of cultural relativism that tolerates anything and everything and criticises nothing’ (Bromell 2009:33).

Policy tools or instruments are applied to government revenues and expenditures, legal processes, information, inquiries, and organisational influences on the market (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:92). Specific tools include financial interventions such as taxes, user charges, tax credits, grants, government loans and subsidies (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:108-113). These mechanisms create incentives or disincentives to citizens' engagement in the activities targeted by the tools.

The instruments also include legislation and regulation, to enable or limit various types of activity, where there is a risk of negative externalities being suffered by uninvolved parties (Weimer and Vining 1999:223; Howlett and Ramesh 2003:103-4). Regulations influence the market, where distortions may otherwise occur. Environmental protection through the Resource Management Act 1991 is an example of a public good being protected through legislation, because of risks to ecosystem viability in an unregulated commercial setting – the 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968).

As well as financial and legal instruments, government has a number of information and advocacy tools, to conduct research and to advise, educate and persuade people to adopt its desired courses of action. Information releases, advertising and public commissions of inquiry exemplify the range of tools available (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:114-6; Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:26-8). Instances are the Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment (1994) and the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (2007-08). Government also creates markets or influences the operation of existing ones, through policy tools such as direct provision of goods and services; contracting with private providers; issuing vouchers to qualifying citizens to access their preferred supplier and type of provision; and issuing licenses to operate in certain areas, often where there is a resource scarcity and a need for its conservation (Weimer and Vining 1999:198; Howlett and Ramesh 2003:97-101).

In summary, the tools relate to voluntary activities by citizens, to activities with some controls, and to activities fully controlled by government. They can address ‘market failures, government failures [and] equity concerns’ (Weimer and Vining 1999:196). They involve advocacy, finance, legislation or services (Bridgman and Davis 2000:70). Any instrument can be combined with other policy tools. There is potential for the CST principles to provide guidance when combinations of policy tools are considered for implementation (Williams 1991:110; Smithies 2003a, 2003b; Williams 2004:110-12; 116-7; Beech 2008).

#### **6.4 Ethical effectiveness of public policy in New Zealand**

How well are we faring with our policy-making and service delivery in terms of just sustainability? Extensive commentary is available on the range of reforms and their effects between 1984 and 1999, a period in which New Zealand went much further than other western jurisdictions in implementing free-market policies and structures (Boston 1994:14-6; Kelsey 1999:10). New Zealand was widely regarded as an experiment in social and economic policy. Kelsey (1999:368) summarises the effects: ‘Since the mid-1980s, New Zealand society has visibly polarised along intersecting lines of race, gender, age and economic class.’ No other government risked as much to travel so far, so quickly (Roper 2005, 2008; Gould 2008:17-18).

While social justice did not enter official policy debate in the neo-liberal period, and nor did poverty, they both preoccupied church groups, non-government organisations, community-based service providers and others aware of social policy consequences (Randerson 1992:4-5; St John 1994; Shirley 1996; Stephens 2005; Roper 2005; Johnson 2007, 2008a; O’Brien 2008). State housing became unaffordable in a ‘market rents’ setting and

unemployment increased sharply, as companies invoked new employment legislation to rationalise and casualise the work force.

The implementation of neo-liberal policies in New Zealand left a legacy of social inequality, conflict and injustice. Poverty remains widespread. While unemployment was alleviated by strong economic performance between 2004 and 2007, many families still depended on food banks because of low wages and benefit rates (CPAG 2003; St John and Craig 2004; NZCCSS 2005; O'Brien 2008). There was no real evidence of 'people-centred' (CIV 2009:45) policy to ensure full employment in times of economic downturn.

The Labour-led government (1999-2008) claimed that its policies such as 'Modern Apprenticeships' and 'Working for Families' assisted with training for employment and ensured that families had access to a living wage. The return to income-related rents for social housing helped state house tenants, many of whom are welfare beneficiaries, to make ends meet. An increase to the Accommodation Supplement (AS) provided relief from rising private sector rental costs. Employment legislation began to restore an equitable balance between worker and employer interests.

The Labour-led government's policies differed from old-style welfare, in that recipients were required to find work quickly. In a buoyant economy, this is not too difficult (O'Brien 2008), but it was not clear how everyone's desire for paid employment would be met in an economic downturn. Left-wing critics of these policy initiatives, including Kelsey (2002), Blaiklock *et al* (2002), Johnson (2003) St John and Craig (2004), Roper (2005) and O'Brien (2008) considered that the policies did not go far enough to help the poorest families. Adherents to the political right-wing, on the other hand, saw tax cuts as a more effective way to increase incomes, in the belief that high tax rates inhibit the economic expansion necessary to sustain the labour

market. Either way, New Zealand society is one of the most unequal among western nations (Gould 2008:36-8; Cheyne *et al* 2008:169-71; Key 2008).

### *Evaluation as a policy development tool*

Through policy evaluation, government's norms, assumptions and policies can be assessed for their ethical effectiveness. As Fischer comments (1995:ix), evaluations should 'incorporate the normative dimension of social and political life.' When evaluation projects are commissioned, specific criteria are designed to support such assessment, relative to the purpose of the evaluation as specified by the organisation paying for it.<sup>iv</sup>

Evaluation may be formative (designed to improve problem specification, policy design and programme development); it may be process-oriented (to validate development processes or improve programme implementation); or it may be summative (focusing on policy impacts and outcomes realised, including any inadvertent ones) (Fischer 1995:2; 20-22; Owen and Rogers 1999:263; SSC 1999d; Lunt *et al* 2003:78; 217; SSC and Treasury 2003).

As a policy enhancement tool, evaluation is relatively new in this country (Shaw 1999:211; Trotman 2003:21-26; Baehler 2003:27-39; Williams 2003:196-213). Increasingly, however, ministers specify that an evaluation framework and projects are required for policy recommendations. The use of evaluation before, during and after development and implementation increases the likelihood of policy goal achievement without inadvertent adverse consequences, provided sufficient time is allowed for rigorous and coherent analysis (Nunns 2009).



For this research, the question arises whether an explicit focus on the ethics of policy impacts would require different criteria to be built into evaluation project design. The research also prompts reflection on the extent to which major policy decisions would prove more robust morally if greater emphasis was placed, at the outset, on any potential negative impacts for powerless people or the environment. This would bring the morality of private impacts into the public arena, identified as systemic issues requiring remedy. Housing and employment policies in New Zealand have both demonstrated the kinds of policy failure that have ethical implications. The detail in both these domains is explored in Chapter 7.

## **6. 5 Governance issues for public policy**

A number of governance themes dominate public policy discourse. They influence the strategic thinking of government and its subsequent grounding in specific policies and services. National consensus on each of these themes is lacking at present. The relevance of these themes for this research is the potential they afford for the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to be integrated with policy design and development.

Prominent governance themes include social equity and environmental justice, combined in this research as just sustainability (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2002; 2003; Agyeman and Evans 2004). Ethical reflection and debate need to inform our search for a workable consensus on all aspects of wellbeing; on the ethics of targeting and redistributing resources; the effectiveness of redistribution in terms of justice; and the sustainable balance between economic and social claims with regard to use of natural resources and environmental impacts.

Inclusive participation in civic processes and decision-making represents another key governance area, highlighted in the relational principles of CST. Its effectiveness depends on ease of public access to government processes; accurate information provision; and community capacity-building to ensure that rights to participate can be exercised meaningfully. Some sectors of the community are disadvantaged in this respect and government should move to alleviate this injustice (Duncan 2007:12-14; O'Brien 2008:210-214).

Ethical governance requires reflection on the best locations for the exercise of power. New Zealand has experimented with devolution of responsibility to communities, but governments have stopped short of devolving power and major resources. The relationship between the government centre and its periphery are analysed periodically, as was the case in the *Review of the Centre* (SSC 2001) and its update reports (SSC 2002b). Real power remains centralised, however, with 'Prescriptive tablets full of long and visionary words, handed down from on high' (Eppel *et al* 2008:1). Governance requires scrutiny as regards the justice of the outcomes arising from it. CST offers the principle of subsidiarity to assist with such analysis.

Integration of policy and service delivery across and within government agencies is another area requiring attention. There is systemic failure to deliver on the ethic of social justice when disadvantaged people's needs fall into policy and servicing gaps between departments. The central agencies promote the idea of 'joined-up government' (MSD 2003; Fancy 2007; SSC 2004a, 2004b, 2007d, 2008b). The theory is understood in the agencies of government, but priorities in officialdom often cause practice to lag behind understanding (Lipsky 1980:506, 511-3; Boston *et al* 1996:322; Shaw 1999:199; Hudson and Lowe 2004:197, 132-5; 210-11; Craig and Courtney 2004; Ryan *et al* 2008; Gill *et al* 2007; Eppel *et al* 2008).

There is some realisation in policy circles that ethics has been a neglected facet of policy endeavour to date. Hicks (2007:11), for example, talks about the absence of ‘reference to normative or prescriptive ethics ... in official publications.’ With reference to the *Development Goals for the State Services* (SSC 2005a), he questions whether codes of conduct ‘go far enough’ and calls for attention to ‘ethical and moral theory’ and the ‘internalisation of [moral] values’ in policy-making and service delivery (Hicks 2007:11). Implying that the Commission’s focus in its strategic goals on public service behaviour has missed the key ethical point, his concern is with a gap in ethical leadership as ‘statecraft,’ as opposed to ‘accountability and toeing the line’ (ibid:13).

In its aggregate, the above mentioned literature on governance suggests that systemic attention to governance ethics is deficient. There appears to be potential for CST to contribute to development of a sound ethical foundation for policy-making and governance. With its own foundation in human dignity, CST has distinctive views on the outcomes of social policies such as access to employment, decent housing for all and the alleviation of poverty. While the consequences of choice are acknowledged, adequate and affordable housing, full employment and an income distribution to enable everyone to reach his or her potential are CST bottom lines (Williams 1991, 2004). Impediments to these outcomes can arise through systemic obstacles and circumstances outside a family’s control. Humans often make poor choices and all are worthy of assistance to remedy their adverse effects.

Neither left-wing nor right-wing traditional politics have dealt effectively to entrenched social injustices, so it is time to design a more sustainable policy paradigm – to reduce the incidence of unemployment, homelessness and ecological degradation. In Chapter 7 to follow, an examination of housing and employment policy suggests the need for a new policy-making paradigm for the New Zealand government and community. This thinking is amplified later on, with insights from the fieldwork responses. A synthesis

of these responses (in Chapter 17) is followed by integration (in Chapter 18) of the CST principles with the concerns for justice identified in the literature and the research fieldwork.

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<sup>i</sup>Policy analysis, development and evaluation all require institutional reflection on the 'postulate of ignorance,' the 'calculus of pain,' and the 'calculus of meaning.' These three concepts are sourced to Berger's *Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change* (1974). They underpin social impact analysis in the environmental resource management discourse. They refer respectively to the precautionary principle of assuming we do not know all the possible impacts of a proposed course of action; the likelihood that policy choices will create burdens for some people; and the right of all people to meaningful lives. The implications for policy-making are that we should proceed cautiously where consequences are unknown, identify where the effects will be felt, and preserve human dignity through protecting the interests of the most vulnerable. This focus on human impacts, especially inadvertent ones, demands consideration of the ethical dimensions of policy-making. The CST principles offer an ethics-based framework for doing this.

<sup>ii</sup> Classical economic theory, originating in Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), states that open markets, unhindered by government regulation, naturally find equilibrium between the forces of supply and demand, such that all needs are met, without wastage. Individuals are said to operate most effectively as self-determining economic units in a liberal political system (Heywood 2002:180). The normative role of government is minimal, according to classical economics and its more recent form, neo-classicism. The application of this theory in New Zealand resulted in the deregulation of its economy and its consequent exposure to competitive global influences.

<sup>iii</sup> In his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936 and 1965), Keynes suggested that, in times of economic downturn, when free markets failed to maintain a balance between labour supply and industrial and consumer demand, Government should intervene to stimulate the economy through reducing taxes or increasing public expenditure. Full employment, a feature of social democratic politics, is a key element in Keynesian economics (Heywood 2002:184). Galbraith promoted this thinking in the USA. In NZ, the Keynesian approach was traditionally adopted by National and Labour governments (except during the neoliberal period - between 1984 and 1999). In 2008 the manifesto of the incoming National-led government subscribed to it, proposing public infrastructure development to counter the impacts of a severe global recession.

<sup>iv</sup> The politics of evaluation have a significant bearing on evaluation research design and on the articulation and dissemination of its findings. Evaluation reports, therefore, should be interpreted in the contexts of whose purposes they were intended to serve and who paid for them.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Key areas of public policy: Housing and employment**

In turning to specific policy domains, we might recall the questions that generated this research – Why are some people homeless? Why is adequate housing unaffordable for many? Why are some unemployed? Why do some groups in society find it particularly difficult to access quality employment and appropriate housing? What about the morality of social attitudes that tolerate homelessness and unemployment in this relatively wealthy country? What should change to ensure optimal public policy effectiveness in terms of just sustainability? What insights does Catholic Social Teaching offer to assist with such change?

To provide illustration and grounding for the above examination of the policy system, this chapter examines the concerns and realities of two significant social policy domains, namely housing and employment. Within each domain, a policy aspect has been chosen for its centrality to clients' success. For housing, this entails affordability and access to state housing. For employment, the work focuses on job-seeker assistance. Both aspects involve direct interactions between officials and clients.

#### **7.1 Housing policy in New Zealand**

Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN 1948) underpins the right to decent housing. Housing is relevant to the CST principles of social justice, participation and the universal destination of created goods, including property. As Roberts (1988:152) asserts: 'Satisfactory housing cannot be regarded as just another commodity ... shelter is at the base of the hierarchy of human needs.'

Recurrent themes in the housing policy discourse include equity in policy assumptions; government's role in housing; whether government should fund mortgage lending; whether current policies address housing costs effectively; saving for a deposit; access to good quality housing; cultural norms for house size and design; tenure options and related costs; whether a state house should be a home for life; causes of and remedies for homelessness; housing intensification; and, more recently, sustainable building design and the environmental impacts of housing development (DTZ 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b; MSD 2007a, 2008a; MSD/IRD 2007; Johnson 2007).

Housing matters for just sustainability because of its centrality to social policy outcomes: 'Failure in housing provision will frustrate all other efforts to achieve social equity and equality of opportunity' (Roberts 1988:151). So, with limited state resources, how can claims for housing assistance be balanced or reconciled? Whose needs are most pressing and why? Whose interests are served by the policy goals? Is the relationship between government's supply-side and demand-side policies optimal? Are the community and common good well served by the housing policies? (Murphy 1999:223-9).

Seven action areas were outlined in the Labour-led government's *New Zealand Housing Strategy* (HNZC 2005b) and they remain relevant today. These were sustainable housing supply, affordability, improved access to home ownership, collaboration with local government and developers, housing quality, capacity building and responses to housing need, including a construction programme (HCNZ 2005a:8). In the views of key community workers, the strategic intent showed awareness of what was needed, but the strategy itself was severely under-resourced and its effectiveness compromised (Johnson 2007).

The 2008 change in government and the onset of recession saw a policy shift to state house sales, in line with the centre-right preference for private property ownership. While it is too early for summative evaluation of the unsubsidised state house purchase policy, media reports (such as that on *One News* on 13 December 2009) are stating that no sales have eventuated among 2800 state tenants approached, because of their inability to afford private sector mortgages on properties that have to be purchased at current market value.

#### *Current housing policies, budget levels and government roles*

Government's main avenue for housing assistance is the Accommodation Supplement (AS). A demand-side response to housing need, established in 1992, it is now delivered through the Ministry of Social Development within the 2004 'Working for Families' policy package.<sup>1</sup> For the year ended 30 June 2009, its funding was \$989m per year (MSD 2009b:99) and its budget for 2009/10 is \$1.166b (Johnson 2010:30). A similar sum is available through Vote: Housing for all of the HNZZ programmes. Half of this pays for the state housing income-related rent subsidy (\$507m in 2008/09; \$540m budgeted for 2009/10). By 30 September 2009, 311 000 households were receiving the AS (Collins 2009b). Social commentators, including Johnson (2007), note that the increasing cost of the AS precludes state investment in many other housing options.

On the supply side of the housing equation, the Housing Corporation alleviates housing need for the most disadvantaged families. Social or subsidised rental housing is accessed through a prioritised waiting list, subject to a Social Allocation System. Need is defined by applicants' housing affordability and adequacy, combined with an assessment of

their ability to access housing and then sustain their occupation of it. There are four categories of need, namely (A) 'at risk,' (B) 'serious housing need,' (C) 'moderate need,' and (D) 'low level need' (HNZC 2009b:12). State rental tenants pay in rent a maximum of 25% of their income. Income-related rents subsidies are accessed by 92% of the tenants, with the remaining 8% paying market rent (ibid:14).

In 2005, the Corporation owned 69 000 dwellings and managed 1500 leased properties as state rentals. The waiting list comprised some 10 000 households, 4000 of which were in the first two categories of need (HNZC 2005a:21; 2005b:4). Auckland accounted for 57% of the identified priority need, compared with 44% of the houses (HNZC 2005b:4). In 2009, the waiting list was the same size. There were 9968 state house qualifying applicants, of whom 261 were in Category A and 3936 in category B (so 4197 in the priority groups). Another 5771 were in Categories C and D (HNZC 2009b:12). The most recent figures (NZCCSS 2009b:4) quote 304 in Category A and 4144 in Category B (i.e. 4468 in the priority groups). The rental portfolio comprises 69173 dwellings in total, of which 3278 or 5% are leased (HNZC 2009b:24).

The state house construction programme is weighted to new property acquisition in Auckland. In 2008-09, \$52.7 million was budgeted for 650 new state houses (HNZC 2008:36, 39), but only \$36m was spent, due to government reprioritising the funds towards existing property upgrades. The HCNZ is on record as saying it can no longer provide housing immediately for those in desperate need. It now takes a month to house the highest priority applicants in Auckland (Collins 2009).

Considering the modest size of the building programme compared to the waiting list, an ethical question arises regarding (C) 'moderate' and (D) 'low level' categories of housing need. Should families who are unlikely



to access state rental housing remain on the waiting list at all? Social justice is not served by creating unrealistic expectations. There is a policy gap to be acknowledged. It affects families with some earning power, but with incomes too low to save a deposit and service a mortgage.

Housing is a major contributor to government's sustainability goals (HNZC 2008:31). The Housing Corporation assists 800 households a year through the Healthy Housing Programme, which involves upgrades and extensions to state houses. The organisation improves the living standards of 4500-5000 tenant families through energy efficiency upgrades to state rental properties (HNZC 2008:1, 2009b:24). The Corporation aims to exemplify sustainable housing design, construction and amenity in its urban redevelopment programmes in state housing localities such as Glen Innes, Porirua, Aranui and Clendon.

Government also encourages government agency coordination, combined with the involvement of third sector organisations and the private sector in social housing and affordable housing provision (HNZC 2008:7). Government programmes based on partnerships include the Welcome Home mortgage guarantee scheme which assisted 1156 families during 2008-09. In 2009, the National-led government increased the loan limits, but not the maximum income limits, for mortgage guarantee coverage, 'to help first home buyers in high-priced areas' (Heatley 2009).

### *Concerns about housing affordability*

Housing and land price increases have outstripped wage increases, affecting families' ability to embark on home ownership and putting pressure on rental rates. Analysis indicates that, in New Zealand: 'Section prices virtually quadrupled (a 286% real increase) between 1981

and 2004. This increase compares with an approximate doubling (a 105% increase) in real house prices' (Grimes and Aitken 2006:23). Land prices have had a disproportionate effect on the supply and cost of new housing. The rate of change highlights the need for effective use of the regulations governing land supply, where regional growth strategies focus on intensification of built-up localities to limit urban sprawl (ibid:ii-iii; ARGF 1999a; 2007).

The Labour-led government played down the incidence of housing-related poverty, claiming that the 2001 restoration of the Income Related Rents policy for state tenancies and increases to the AS in 2005 under the 'Working for Families' policy package solved the housing affordability problem. It did not do so, as successive *Social Reports*, *Living Standards Reports* and independent analyses testify (Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b; Roper 2005; Johnson 2007; St John and Wynd 2008; MSD 2008a; O'Brien 2008; Stephens 2008; Johnson 2010).

The report *Pockets of Significant Hardship and Poverty* acknowledges that much financial hardship for low-income families, especially social welfare beneficiaries, is attributable to housing costs (MSD 2007c:1). After meeting housing outgoings exceeding 30% of their income, some beneficiaries have residual incomes amounting to just 40% of the average income. This is insufficient to support a family (ibid:7-8). NGO service providers, independent analysts and community advocates operating close to the grass-roots have been advising government of this for years, but have not been heard (Johnson 2003; NZCCSS 2004b; Roper 2005:233-4; Salvation Army 2004, 2008a, 2008b; Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b; St John and Wynd 2008; NZCCB 2008b).

Furthermore, the *Social Report 2008* indicates that: 'In 2007, 26% of all New Zealand households spent more than 30% of their disposable

income on housing costs, up from 21% in 2004' (MSD 2008a:64). For households with children under 18 years, the comparable figure was 32% (ibid:65). This situation has been steadily worsening, with the proportion of low-income families spending more than 30% on housing doubling between 1998 and 2007 (ibid:64). The *Social Report 2009* indicates that by the end of 2008, this proportion had increased to 39% of low-income earners (MSD 2009a). A gross income-to-outgoings ratio of 25% is the maximum a low-income household can sustain (HNZC 2005a:23).

### *Declining rates of home ownership*

Private home ownership is a core social value in this country. For many decades, government offered low-interest, low-deposit mortgage finance for first home seekers of modest means to purchase their own homes. This was a major contribution to nation building (Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b; Johnson 2007). Subsidised public funding for first home purchase remains a desirable (but minimised) complement to the direct supply of rental homes by government and its provision of the AS (Smith and Robinson 2005a; Johnson 2007). The high ratio of housing capital cost to annual income is reflected in the inability of many young families to save the 20% deposit required for bank mortgage access. With population increases in localities of high demand, problems of housing distribution, supply and affordability are magnified (ARGF 1999b, 2007; Bates and Kane 2006; Johnson 2007, 2010; DTZ 2004b, 2007a, 2007b).

While the AS addresses current shortfalls in ability to meet rental or mortgage costs, it is not intended to provide the means to save for a home ownership deposit. This means that it can trap aspirants to home ownership on a private sector rental treadmill (Smith and Robinson 2005b; Robinson, Scobie and Hallinan 2006; Johnson 2007; MSD 2007c:13). To date, there is no policy response to this dilemma.

### *Housing outcome disparities among particular groups in society*

Major social reports in the past two decades have pointed to disparities in housing outcomes among ethnic groups in New Zealand society, due to differentiated socio-economic achievement (TPK 1998a, 2000; MSD *Social Reports* 2001-09). Disadvantage appears entrenched, despite government endorsement that housing is a basic human need, with major impacts on people's quality of life (MSD 2008a:64). Such disparity is evident across all the indicators of achievement, namely income source and amount; housing outgoings-to-income ratios; rental tenure relative to home ownership; occupancy rates; the incidence of overcrowding and homelessness. Circumstances differ among ethnic groups for all of these indicators. Rates of home ownership compared to rental tenure tend to be lower among the Maori and Pacific populations, which typically have younger and larger families and lower incomes than New Zealanders in general (Roper 2005:59-60; MSD 2008a:64-67; MSD 2009b).

Household occupancy rates also demonstrate socio-economic disparity. In Auckland: 'Areas of low household size correlate with high economic status' (Friesen *et al* 2000:36). In the poorer localities, average household occupancy rates are higher. The difference relates to cultural norms about family size and composition. It also reflects different stages in family life-cycles and decisions by extended families to share housing to reduce costs (ibid; MSD 2008a:67).

*Census 2006* and the *Social Reports* between 2005 and 2009 indicate that Pacific peoples are the most likely to live in overcrowded conditions:

In 2006, 43 percent of Pacific peoples lived in households requiring extra bedrooms. Maori and those in the Other ethnic group were the next most likely, with 23% of each group requiring at least one extra bedroom. Of those living in more severe crowding situations (households requiring two or more bedrooms) Pacific peoples and Maori made up the largest groups (37 percent and 32 percent respectively) (MSD 2008a:67).<sup>ii</sup>

Overcrowding occurs mostly in Manukau City (25% of households), the Eastern Bay of Plenty (18-19%), and Porirua and Auckland Cities (both 17%) (ibid). These proportions have remained constant through 2008 and 2009 (MSD 2009b). Housing policy lacks effective response, with government's housing budget thinly spread among many recipients of the AS, not all of whom are on low incomes. This raises concern about resource targeting, with injustice being perpetuated through middle-class capture of public resources (Johnson 2007; St John and Wynd 2008).

### *The nature and causes of homelessness*

Housing shortages are acute in Auckland. Social injustice is manifest in homelessness, which has structural economic causes related to housing affordability and is compounded by health and social difficulties on the part of those affected (O'Brien and de Haan 2000). It is so far removed from the CST principles of human dignity and social justice that its elimination should be a vital outcome for housing policy.

Homelessness is subject to several definitions and causal interpretations (Roberts 1988:162; Neale 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001; Groot *et al* 2008; Leggatt-Cook 2008). As well as street dwellers, homelessness affects those who lack 'the security of adequate shelter' (CCJP 1997:11). Cars, caravans, garages and sheds all constitute facets of homelessness, as do emergency housing and sub-standard dwellings. O'Brien and de

Haan (2000:6-7) note that there are at least three distinct forms of homelessness. These relate to people who are sleeping outside, those in temporary facilities such as night shelters or women's refuges and those who are at risk of eviction. An ethical approach to housing policy requires reflection on the causes of this hardship and the role of government in its prevention and alleviation.

### *Politics and just sustainability in housing*

The Salvation Army has long contended that, while economic policies continue to produce unemployment and poverty, the open market will never provide for everyone to have a secure and decent home (Roberts 1988: 175-6). Social justice requires government intervention, therefore, to alleviate unequal access to housing, and to ensure tenure security and choice (Johnson 2003; NZCCSS 2004b; Smith and Robinson 2005a, 2005b; Johnson 2007, 2008a, 2010).

Successive governments, of both left- and right-wing persuasions, have responded to demand pressures with inconsistent, socially polarising and contradictory directives, in the name of economic growth (National) and social development (Labour). Significant policies of the 'neoliberal' 1990s saw government cease its large-scale first mortgage lending, implementation of market rents for state houses and the establishment of the AS to provide a demand-side response to the cost of housing (Luxton 1991; Roper 2005; Cheyne *et al* 2008:187-8).

In the 'Third Way' setting from 2000 onwards, income-related rents were re-introduced to alleviate poverty among state rental tenants. Apart from small-scale pilot projects and programmes targeted for Maori and rural homeowners, first mortgage lending was not re-established, in large part

because of the cost of the AS and the difficulty of dismantling it. No policy settings have adequately addressed the housing difficulties of low-income households renting in the private sector (CPAG 2003; Johnson 2003, 2007; Smith and Robinson 2005a; Salvation Army 2008b).

Unemployment creates poverty, which leads to inability to service housing costs. The resultant doubling-up of families into fewer houses causes overcrowding, with health and educational impacts which then become entrenched and inter-generational. Poor educational outcomes inevitably lead to employment disadvantage and the cycle repeats itself. Social justice requires that this cycle be broken.

As well as constituting a social justice issue, housing is a key driver of the economy, through employment in the construction industry and the creation of a national property asset base against which finance can be secured for other forms of economic activity. Economic policies ensuring that families have incomes to meet their needs are needed to complement more just housing policies (Waldegrave 2000, Waldegrave *et al* 2006).

Housing policy debate constantly raises questions of equitable resource distribution (HNZC 2005b:17-19, 47-49). These issues are explored with experts during the research fieldwork phase. Key questions include the respective roles of central government, local bodies and the third sector in housing; government provision of first home mortgages; and the right of permanent tenure for state tenants. Questions also arise regarding the effectiveness of demand-side policies such as the AS, as against supply-side responses to housing need. Is the AS 'fairer' than the home loans programmes which it replaced? Should there be subsidies for all renters and mortgagors who pay more than 25% of their income in housing costs, or should there be an upper income limit? Should private sector

renters qualify for assistance comparable to that available to state tenants paying income-related rents?

We should reflect further. Is the current distribution of assistance optimal relative to need? Has government abrogated some of its housing responsibilities over the past two decades, or is the current level of assistance the best, and the most, that can be reasonably funded from public revenue? Here is the core of the housing policy dilemma. Once the views of the research participants on these important ethical questions have been canvassed (in Chapter 15), it will be time to link the principles of CST to the housing policy imperatives (in Chapter 18), as we search for guidance on the most justly sustainable way forward.

## **7.2 Employment policy in New Zealand**

Access to good quality and fulfilling employment is a fundamental human right. It is also a foundation for family stability, within a cohesive and egalitarian community, which is oriented to the common good while fostering the development of all its members. Because of its centrality, along with decent housing, for individual and societal wellbeing, there is a rich vein of analytical discourse, critique and debate informing policy directions for employment in New Zealand.

The Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment (PMTFE 1994a) identified unemployment as 'New Zealand's biggest challenge'. That challenge has since been reshaped by economic cycles and shifts in political power bases, but an essential social policy orientation towards employment remains constant (Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:210-1; O'Brien 2008:179, 213-5; MSD 2008a:44-5). Identity and self esteem are defined by the types of jobs we hold. Unemployment is recognised in CST, and



in social policy, as demeaning and contrary to human dignity (*LE* 1981:18; *CIV* 2009:25; Archer 2003:26-7).

### *Employment policy scope, content and connections*

Employment policy relates to economic policy and labour market policy but each policy is differentiated from the other two in terms of purpose, scope and orientation. Important themes are identified in the *Human Capability Framework* as ‘capacity, opportunity and matching’ (DoL 1998:1; Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:227-9). They reappear in the title to the *Government Employment Strategy 2000* as ‘Opportunity, Capacity and Participation.’ Shaw and Eichbaum (2005:207) describe employment as ‘a sort of meta-policy domain’ with elements that ‘crop up right across the span of government activity.’

Economic policy covers inflation control, the monetary system, taxation, the exchange rate, public expenditure and wage stabilisation (*ibid*:206). It stimulates or depresses demand for workers through encouraging or dampening labour-intensive business expansion and job creation. Labour market policy deals with the effective matching of labour supply with demand for employees, linking job-seekers with jobs. Employment policy focuses on individuals’ capability and access to jobs, facilitated through active labour market programmes (ALMPs) that aim to maximise people’s access to quality employment (Waldegrave 1998:11-12; Johri *et al* 2004).

ALMPs include client-focused capacity-building programmes such as the Training Opportunities Programme (TOP); ‘matching’ programmes such as Work Testing, job search assistance and post-placement support; opportunity creation programmes such as the Enterprise Allowance; and

delivery mechanisms such as Enhanced Case Management and the monitoring of ‘stair-cased’ progression by job-seekers through the available programmes (ibid; MSD 2008b).

*Full employment for just sustainability in employment policy*

The meaning of ‘full employment’ is contestable (HRC 2004:296) and its application pragmatic, rather than absolute, in employment policy. Its starting point is job creation through sustainable economic growth. Education and training pathways must be provided to equip people with skills to function in the labour market. Job-seekers’ skills must be matched to the work available and to business requirements. Local analysis of supply and demand, funded by central government, should identify these interfaces (Spoonley 2005:3-5).

The recurrent themes of CST related to employment comprise human dignity, just conditions of work, a fair living wage and the right to organise for worker protection. CST also offers guidance related to the role of government in ensuring those who want to work can do so, the role of workers and families themselves, and that of local organisations whose work contributes to maintaining well-informed and balanced local labour markets (*RN* 1891; *QA* 1931; *LE* 1981). The immorality of structural unemployment<sup>iii</sup> is seen in CST for what it is – a means of controlling inflation which compromises human dignity (*CIV* 2009:35).

Policies should reflect a just balance between workers’ rights and responsibilities, and between incentives for finding work and sanctions for non-engagement (Roper 2005; Duncan 2007; O’Brien 2008). A tendency to patronise job-seekers often appears in policy-making and programme delivery (Lipsky 1980:509-11; Moss 2001). It is based on

deficit thinking and is not conducive to justice or respect for people's dignity. Some policies for sole parents exemplify this attitude (Baker and Tippin 2004; Baker 2008). It reflects a sense among some politicians and officials that people's poverty is their own fault. They are seen to have failed, so are 'undeserving' of support (Duncan 2007:264-6).

Drawing on the work of Lipsky (1980), Hill cites a theory of 'street level bureaucracy' to explain the power held by front-line officials over clients in vulnerable situations such as homelessness or unemployment, and their influence on policy implementation. To cope with rigid policies and high workloads, many officials are said to interact routinely with clients in ways that appear to stereotype and judge them, rather than treating them with respect. Officiousness can be exacerbated by discretionary roles in resource allocation (Hill 2005:242-9).

#### *Successive governments and employment policy*

Political preferences involve ends and means. In the National view, economic growth to fund all other aspects of civil endeavour is the core policy purpose. This contrasts with the traditional Labour view, where social inclusion is the core policy goal and economic development one of the means by which it will be attained. Politics in New Zealand has oscillated between these poles in the past 40 years and policy settings have fluctuated accordingly (Lunt *et al* 2008:4).

Throughout the 1990s, government's employment strategy focused on 'breaking the welfare cycle' and 'reducing dependency' on the state (O'Brien 2008:179). In 1996, following hard-line neoliberal 'workfare' models overseas, our government introduced the Community Wage. It created an onus on welfare beneficiaries to engage in community work to

validate their income support, irrespective of job availability, suitability or access to childcare (Shaw 2001; Shaw and Eichbaum 2005; O'Brien 2008:192). Unemployment rose, with more than 200,000 people being registered as out of work by 1997. Government failed to provide an adequate social safety net and the means for all to participate with dignity in society. People were expected by their own means to get a job, no matter what kind of job, to demonstrate responsible citizenship through engagement in paid work (O'Brien 2008:224).

The Labour-led government's three terms of office saw strong economic growth and a decrease in unemployment, for which government assertively took the credit. From the 'hard workfare' of the mandatory Community Wage (Higgins 1999), government moved to the 'soft workfare' of 'Work First' (O'Brien 2008:232). The casework focus with job-seekers changed (in terminology, not in substance) from enforcement and compliance to 'work readiness' (Humpage and Craig 2008; Lunt 2008:61). Policies such as 'Jobs Jolt' (2003) and aspects of 'Working for Families' (2004) dispensed expectations about welfare benefits, work readiness and work testing, but without overt recognition of the influence of the global economy with regard to job opportunities in this country (Duncan 2007:265; O'Brien 2008:236). Similar judgmental attitudes were apparent in Australian welfare policy (Moss 2001).

Due to stringent expectations placed on job-seekers in policies such as 'Jobs Jolt,' many commentators view the Fifth Labour-led government's strategic approach as neo-liberalism concealed in the language of new social democracy (St John and Craig 2004; Roper 2005:234; Humpage and Craig 2005:46-7; Duncan 2007:245-6; O'Brien 2008:201). Roper (2005:234) talks about 'neo-liberalism with a social democratic veneer.' These commentators agree that continuing poverty signals ongoing injustice in our communities, not yet alleviated by active labour market

policies (Duncan 2007:247). Besides job shortages, there is particular concern about justice for those who genuinely cannot work (ibid:265-6).

*Extending Opportunities to Work* (2005) saw the introduction of a new service model of enhanced case management, designed to ‘make services for people on benefit more focused on work’ and to ensure ‘the right job at the right time, right from the start’ (Minister for Social Development and Employment 2005:10-11). Enhanced case management meant intensive scrutiny and stringent work-testing, with the goal of reducing welfare dependency (ibid:23; Duncan 2007:239; O’Brien 2008:217-23; Stephens 2008:36). Assessed by some commentators as pragmatic but not just, this strategy fed into the Social Security Amendment Act 2006.

In times of economic recession, policy reliance on work availability is ‘unrealistic when the market determines employment opportunities’ (O’Brien 2008:236). CST interprets ideologically-based ‘work first’ expectations of unemployed people at such times as unjust. Neither government nor New Zealand workers ‘control the environment in which work is created and sustained’ (ibid). As Moss (2001:8) observes: ‘Where there is structural unemployment, the unemployed are no more responsible for their condition than are other dependent groups for theirs.’ As the Department of Labour notes, ‘In 2010, the unemployment rate rose to 7.3%, the highest level in 10 years’ (DoL 2010). Government analysts expect the rate to ‘peak in mid-2010 and remain elevated until 2011’ (ibid). Effective matching of labour supply and demand will always be a challenge, especially when the economy is contracting.

The National-led government has retained the Labour-initiated ‘Working for Families’ as the employment policy framework. It has also been working with businesses and communities to find strategies to create and sustain jobs, but the increase in unemployment during 2009 underscores

the extent to which our economy is vulnerable to international pressures. As a recent *Vulnerability Report* (NZCCSS 2009b:2) indicates: ‘The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose from 4.3% in the September 2008 quarter to 6.5% in the September quarter this year, bringing the number of people unemployed to 150,000.’

The official unemployment total had increased to 168,000 by 30 December 2009 (DoL 2010) and was still rising in early 2010, albeit at a slower rate than that prevailing in 2009. Several hundred new job-seeker case managers were appointed by Work and Income to assist the unemployed beneficiaries, whose numbers had increased to 66,000 by December 2009 (MSD 2010). This increase required an upwardly revised budget estimate for the unemployment benefit of \$1.078b for 2009/10 (Johnson 2010). This cost is one which a just society must absorb without blame. Government’s interactions with job-seekers should demonstrate respect for situations outside their control and a focus on helping them back into suitable work of their own choosing, at the earliest opportunity.

### *Ethics and policy options for full employment*

The ethics of access to decent, secure and fairly paid employment are acknowledged by society and government. The 1994 Employment Task Force reported that ‘New Zealanders want jobs and they want every other New Zealander to have the same opportunity to work and enjoy life’ (PMTFE 1994b:3). Harris (1999:30) reiterates this, noting that ‘People need jobs,’ the market model ‘carries a social cost’ and government has a ‘moral imperative’ to ensure work is available. In his recent ‘Statement to Parliament,’ the Prime Minister reiterated that ‘the government’s focus remains on the economy and on jobs,’ (Key 2010).

Shaw and Eichbaum (2008:219) have observed that: 'Broad agreement across the political divide that the creation and maintenance of the highest level of sustainable employment should be a central goal of public policy.' There is political disagreement as to the way in which this goal might be achieved, through right-wing 'market liberalism' or left-wing 'market management' (ibid:220). CST is neutral on which approach is preferable, but explicit regarding outcomes required for justice (CA 1991:47-8). Fletcher (2009:33) identifies key facets of social policy in times of recession, including 'the importance of focusing on distributional impacts,' the need to 'prioritise the least well-off and children' and the need for policy developers 'to be aware of the long-term impacts of policy changes on the social policy framework.'

Shaw and Eichbaum (2008:219) also observe that over the past 25 years, 'Labour and National governments were willing to accept high levels of unemployment as the price to be paid while the economy was being restructured.' Policy analysts were reluctant to acknowledge a norm of structural unemployment (Harris 1999:146) but there certainly was one (Waldegrave 1998:7, 13). From 2000, government committed itself in principle to full employment, but the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU) remained its underlying assumption. As far as CST is concerned, this concept, named by Friedman (1977:15) as the 'natural rate of unemployment,' is immoral, whether explicit or covert in policy-making (SRS 1987:18; CA 1991:15; CIV 2009:35).

Assessment of employment policy effectiveness should acknowledge the impact of global pressures on the stability of the domestic economy. Demand-side issues requiring strategic responses include economic downturns, labour market planning, analysis and matching of supply and demand; loss of business confidence, unrealistic employer expectations, company receptiveness to innovation and access to seed funding for new investment. Supply-side issues include employability, generic skills

capability, qualifications levels and productivity (Spoonley 2005:4-5). Achievement of full employment needs input from all employers operating in the public, community and private sectors.

The foregoing observations have provided an overview of the most significant issues facing policy developers and decision-makers in the domains of housing and employment. In both domains, justice would be enhanced through responsive relationships between government and communities. The norms, roles and responsibilities within both domains are canvassed later with the research participants, many of whom are active in one or other field. In the meantime, Chapter Eight provides an opportunity to draw breath and reflect on the theoretical material now canvassed. It synthesises the theories discussed in Chapters 2-7 and indicates their separate and combined relevance for the research fieldwork questions, the data-gathering and interpretations to follow.

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<sup>i</sup> 'Working for Families' is a three-part social policy package, implemented in 2004 and providing for income supplementation through Tax Credits for working families, an Accommodation Supplement to assist with housing costs, and Childcare Assistance to enable adults to participate in paid work.

<sup>ii</sup> The *Social Report* (MSD 2003) and the *Quality of Life Report* (Gatt (ed) 2003) have comparable data relating to Census 2001. This is useful for time series analysis and comparisons.

<sup>iii</sup> Structural unemployment is the term used to describe the neoliberal economic policy assumption that a level of surplus labour supply should be maintained, to provide recruitment choice for employers, to keep wages down and to control domestic inflation (Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:205-7). Neoliberal economic theory identifies a 'natural rate of unemployment' that has to be maintained to limit inflation (Harris 1999:147). Barry (2005:150) suggests that 'The implication is, of course, that some employable people have to be sacrificed on the altar of economic stability.' As the antithesis of full employment policies, structural unemployment has an ethical dimension, captured by Pope John Paul II in his insistence that no one should be considered surplus.

In his discussion of the need for a just balance between equality, efficiency and employment, Waldegrave (1998:17) alludes to the neoliberal assumption, prevalent in the 1990s, that a 6% unemployment rate was normal and tolerable. As the fieldwork indicates, research participants were also aware and critical of this assumption. Its origin was widely attributed to Hayek (1975) and Friedman (1977). Also see Friedman (1953:117-132) for an earlier instance of this line of thought.



## **Chapter Eight**

### **Indicative links between CST and public policy**

Several theoretical domains have now been canvassed. Before fieldwork insights are gathered, the links among the theories need to be woven. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the insights already outlined. It also has an early interpretative role, linking CST and the public policy system in terms of their respective principles and drivers for action according to the aforementioned theories. Chapters 2-7 have traversed Catholic moral theology; political, economic, environmental and social commentary; public policy systems; and two public policy domains, namely employment and housing. This is the raw material for interim interpretation and synthesis.

The principles of CST have been defined and illustrated with reference to their implications for society, the environment, politics and the economy. As the conceptual core of the research, the CST material buttresses the research inquiry. In addition, there is an institutional component to the CST presence in New Zealand. The instruments for CST to increase its public profile and influence are, firstly, the relationship that the church already has with the state and, secondly, the role of the Catholic education system. These links have also formed part of the theory-building phase of this research project.

I have explored social and environmental justice, separately and combined as just sustainability. The public policy system in New Zealand has been examined, with reference to the instruments, outcomes and results of employment and housing policy intervention. Both these policy domains have social and environmental impacts and thus constitute major contributors, or inhibitors, to just sustainability. Societies which are justly sustainable have all their elements of well-being – social, environmental, economic, cultural and spiritual – in balance.

## **8.1 The theoretical elements within each paradigm**

CST and the public policy system both have guiding principles and a set of methods and/or instruments (namely CST middle axioms and public policy tools) to enable application of their respective norms and principles. The interdependent CST principles have been considered in their entirety, while clustered in the two subsets reiterated below. The policy assumptions relating to this research, conversely, are representative rather than all-encompassing and relate specifically to the outcome of just sustainability. To cover all the necessary theoretical domains, four sets of concepts have been examined, with a number of components in each, as follows:

### ***Relevant guiding principles for the public policy system***

- a. The discourse on social justice
- b. The discourse on environmental justice; and
- c. The discourse on just sustainability

### ***The guiding principles of Catholic Social Teaching***

- a. Relating to sites of social and environmental impact
  - Human dignity, personalism and authentic development
  - The family as the foundation of society
  - The common good and solidarity
  - Freedom, rights and reciprocal responsibilities
  - Social justice and equity

- The preferential option for the poor
- Respect for cultural autonomy and diversity; and
- Stewardship of creation and sustainability

b. Relating to sites for economic and political solutions

- Economic justice
- The universal destination of public and private goods
- The dignity of work, fair wages and the rights of workers
- Subsidiarity and the role of government
- Effective participation in civil and political processes; and
- Global and local development and peace

***Mechanisms for achieving selected public policy outcomes***

- a. Policy systems, governance and service delivery
- b. Housing policy; and
- c. Employment policy

***Instruments for achieving Catholic Social Teaching outcomes***

- a. The church/ state relationship in New Zealand; and
- b. The Catholic education system

In the above typology, the policy system is the seedbed for all the currently accepted government outcomes, and CST is the seedbed for ethics-based thinking, oriented to morally sound outcomes which may be sought more effectively through new ethical approaches to governance.

## 8.2 Catholic Social Teaching and just sustainability

CST ‘deals with the nature of moral behaviour in the social, political and economic order’ (Smithies 1994:148). While it does not prescribe policy specifics (*CIV* 2009:9), it has the capacity to assist governments to develop ethical norms to guide policy development, in a manner that ensures human dignity within the context of the common good (Basile 1998:5; Massaro 1998:7). Its principles of social justice and stewardship of creation support ‘just sustainability,’ an emergent secular discourse combining social justice, environmental justice and sustainable development as an integrated outcome for both public policy and private economic endeavour (Agyeman and Evans 2004; Agyeman 2005).

Social justice lies at the heart of the CST tradition, which states that policy should be developed according to its likely effect on the poorest and least powerful members of our communities, not for those with the power, as is usually the case (USCCB 1986:21; 1996b:4-12). The meaning of social justice is contested, but human dignity, fairness, equity, civic participation and equitable access to opportunities are its dominant themes (ibid:42-4).

While social justice has always been embedded in Catholic social theology, environmental sustainability is an added focus, particularly since Pope John Paul II expressed concern for it in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:34) and throughout a *World Day of Peace Message* prior to the 1992 Earth Summit (Pope John Paul II 1990:5-7, 11). More recently, environmental justice has featured in the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI (see *CIV* 2009:48-51 and the *World Day of Peace Message 2010*). A new balance is sought between the social and economic development needs of humanity and the carrying capacity of the earth (*SRS* 1987:27-34; USCCB 1991; Mich 1998:389-90;

Massaro 2000a:226-7). *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:48) reaffirms the Christian message of stewardship, recognising that ecological time is running out.

Environmental justice refers to the requirement in equity for the ecological benefits and burdens of economic activity to be shared evenly, rather than poor communities bearing the full brunt of adverse environmental impacts (Mich 1998:400; Agyeman and Evans 2004; Shiva 2005). This requirement in equity constitutes the key link with social justice. The CST option for the poor, with its repudiation of unjust decisions affecting powerless people, encapsulates this ideal (CA 1991:57; Pope John Paul II 1999a:18).

### *Just sustainability within Catholic Social Teaching*

Papal encyclicals articulate the traditional CST principles and maintain their relevance by adapting them to new social, economic and political conditions (DCE 2005:27). The key themes of CST which are integral to this research include respect for people, respect for creation, the right of those who wish to work to earn a wage sufficient to sustain their families; the ability to participate in civic processes, including decision-making; the proper role of government; the balance between rights and responsibilities; the right to develop to one's highest potential; the right to own property and the duty to contribute to the common good in a spirit of solidarity. Each CST principle has both social and environmental implications.

In New Zealand as elsewhere, evidence of social and environmental injustice shows that our individualistic consumer norms are not conducive to just sustainability. CST stresses the need for redistributive policies to counter systemic injustice. The Catholic Bishops point to the environmental degradation created by unconstrained economic growth, along with the

social injustice created when such growth benefits few people at the expense of many (NZCCB 1995; 1998a; 1998b).

The congruence between the principles of CST and the issues identified in the secular discourse on just sustainability is clear once the two paradigms are compared. This congruence opens the way for CST to provide a ‘moral compass’ to guide ethical policy development for just sustainability (Vallely 1998:159). Theoretical and practical concerns in the policy domains of employment and housing illustrate the moral value of the CST perspective.

### **8.3 Catholic Social Teaching and housing policy**

The literature already canvassed affirms that shelter is a basic human right. It is encapsulated in the CST principles of human dignity, social justice, the family as the foundation of society, effective civic participation and the universal destination of created goods. Housing should be adequate, accessible, affordable and not crowded. It should offer construction quality and standard of amenity comparable with the average in New Zealand communities. It should provide tenure choice and stability.

Social and environmental justice constitutes the CST bottom line for housing policy. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:17) indicates that no one should be homeless, in the absolute sense, nor at risk of becoming so, due to property unsuitability, discrimination, gross overcrowding, inability to meet rental or mortgage payments, or reliance on temporary or sub-standard housing (also see USCCB 1986:45; CBEW 1996: 37,71; USCCB 2005). As Papal teaching frequently asserts, the goods of creation were intended for everyone’s use and these goods include decent housing.

Through market and government failures, and despite aspirational strategies, housing policy in this country falls short of the CST bottom line. Socio-economic disparities linked to ethnicity typify all the comparative indicators of housing achievement. *Social Reports* indicate that Maori and Pacific communities have lower income levels than the national average; higher housing outgoings-to-income ratios; more extensive occupancy of rented rather than owned dwellings; and greater frequency of overcrowding; transience and homelessness (MSD 2005a:68-71; HNZA 2005a 69-71; MSD 2008a:64-71; MSD 2009a, 2009d).

Cultural norms for family size, roles, age structure and intergenerational composition have a bearing on housing outcomes. The CST position is that such variations should be factored into housing policy, so that cultural diversity and exercise of cultural choice do not result in systemic racism through differing levels of housing suitability. The CST principle concerning the recognition of cultural autonomy and diversity is applicable to issues of dwelling size, access to services and facilities, property quality and affordability. As CST indicates, such difficulties are ethically untenable (GS 1965:60; SRS 1987:17; EO 2001:6, 28).

#### *CST and the moral unacceptability of homelessness*

Homelessness is an aspect of the New Zealand housing market which should be regarded as policy anathema on moral grounds, in a developed first world nation. As well as street dwellers, homelessness includes those have been evicted; who face major barriers to obtaining housing; who are in emergency or temporary accommodation; who are living in overcrowded or substandard dwellings; or who have been dislocated due to a natural disaster (CCJP 1997; Neale 1997; O'Brien and de Haan 2000; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001; Groot *et al* 2008; Leggatt-Cook 2008).

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (1997:11) (now Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand) attributes the ethical problem of homelessness to political choices. Government has a moral responsibility to alleviate it. Remedies lie in the choice of policy interventions that ensure adequate housing supply, affordability and accessibility for all members of society. CST has a potential role in providing moral signposts to influence housing policy objectives and outcomes, through the input of Caritas to political, legislative and policy-making processes.

*The imbalance between supply and demand for social housing*

State housing, the main source of social housing, is a costly but essential public investment in families unable to meet their own housing needs. Its provision fosters the common good, another core theme among the CST principles. Whole societies are morally weakened if their poorest members are inadequately housed. State housing provision is compatible with the CST principles of social justice, the right to shelter, human dignity and support for families. It is accessed through a social allocation system in which applications are prioritised on the basis of need (HNZC 2005b:27-8).

The difficulty with a supply-side intervention such as state housing is its scarcity. Maori and Pacific families are over-represented on the state house waiting lists and among the tenant clientele. While affordability is not necessarily related to ethnicity, the composition of the state house waiting list suggests that fewer avenues exist for minority ethnic groups to achieve affordable housing in the private market (HNZC 2005a; MSD 2008a).



High and rising rent-to-income ratios are not conducive to family or social stability and, when excessive, are unjust from the CST viewpoint. Many low-income families renting in the private sector spend more than half of their earnings on housing-related expenditure, in contrast to most state tenants whose outgoings are set at a maximum of 25% of their earnings (HNZC 2005b:27; MSD 2005a:69; MSD 2008a:64-5).

### *Home ownership and CST views on private property*

CST supports the acquisition of private property as an element of authentic human development (*LE* 1981:14; USCCB 1986:53-4; *CA* 1991:30, 43; *CIV* 2009:21, 36). Home ownership creates stability for families and solidarity within communities. Through construction industry job creation, its benefits are also seen in the economic policy arena. Home ownership supports several CST principles – human dignity; the centrality of the family in society; social participation; the universal destination of created goods (*CA* 1991:43); and the link between private property and social obligation, expressed in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:42) as the ‘social mortgage’ and in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:34) as the ‘logic of gift.’

CST does not advocate particular policy interventions. Yet among all the housing policy instruments, targeted direct provision of low-interest mortgage lending is probably the most effective for giving modest-income families a start in life, a financial asset and a sense of affiliation with their communities through owning their own homes. As such, it is the most compatible with the principles of CST. It is costly, maybe even fiscally unaffordable for government, with annual subsidies estimated in the *New Zealand Housing Strategy 2005* at \$30,000 per household (HNZC 2005b:13).

Central government should not abrogate its responsibility for policy-making that ensures shelter for all. The application of CST principles to housing policy and outcomes suggests that a core role of central government is to ensure, directly or indirectly, adequate housing for all members of the community. This has to be made affordable. Partnerships with the third sector are compatible with subsidiarity, but devolution of government responsibility to other bodies without adequate resourcing is not.

#### **8.4 Catholic Social Teaching and employment policy**

There are two adverse aspects of employment policy in New Zealand which would benefit from the application of CST principles. The first is the assumption in policy circles that structural unemployment is required in macroeconomic management (Vallely 1998:152-3; Harris 1999:146; Barry 2005:150; Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:219). The second is decision-making remoteness from the local impacts of government assistance for job-seekers.

##### *Catholic Social Teaching and why full employment matters*

The CST principles of human dignity, authentic development and the dignity of work all relate to employment policy and its impacts. Structural unemployment is alien to all of them and is morally deficient. As Pope John Paul II indicated (*LE* 1981:18; *SRS* 1987:18), CST supports full employment as the most important goal of economic policy, since work is for the authentic development of people and not simply for profits. Pope Benedict XVI reiterated this in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009:32).

Full employment framed New Zealand's historical initiatives in social security provision. Access to paid employment was assumed for everyone

who wanted a job. Large-scale unemployment was unknown. This policy setting was consistent with the CST principles regarding the dignity of work and the right to wages sufficient to support one's family. The state accepted responsibility to ensure full employment and used a Keynesian economic model to provide work (Cheyne *et al* 2008:33-5, 44, 74-6; Gould 2008:48).

As New Zealand social commentators point out, four decades ago, social security (as insurance) in this country gave way to social welfare (as well-being) based on the idea that policy should enable everyone to participate in society (Cheyne *et al* 2008:38, 61). This would have been just if the economic policy commitment to full employment had endured. It was undermined, however, by an increasing labour market imbalance between job-seekers and jobs available. This imbalance was caused by deteriorating terms of trade over several decades, and (more recently) free market monetarism focused on inflation control at the expense of economic and labour market growth (Gould 2008:30-1, 102-7).

Over the past two decades, New Zealand governments have moved away from using major public works to supplement private sector job availability during economic downturns. Technological, economic and legal factors have caused labour force retrenchment, casualisation of the workforce and greater risk of unemployment (Spoonley and Davidson 2004:25-9).

For CST, the economic policy debate should focus on how to restore full employment, in the interests of social justice, so that people can exercise their right to authentic development through work and their responsibility to support their families and contribute to society. This reflects the CST view that economic policy is for people, not the other way round (*PT* 1965:26; *CA* 1981:15; *USCCB* 1986:13; *CBEW* 1996:13; *CIV* 2009:25, 63).

### *Catholic Social Teaching and why subsidiarity matters*

The second key employment issue for CST is the location in which policy, programme and resource decisions relating to job creation and employment initiatives are made. The CST principle of subsidiarity offers a perspective different from central government norms about where significant decision-making should occur (*QA* 1931:79). Subsidiarity is one of the most significant CST principles for this research because of the propensity for government decisions to be made centrally, and often unsuitably, due to a distant misunderstanding of local needs, circumstances, vulnerabilities, energies and opportunities (*CBEW* 1996:51-2; *DCE* 2005:28; *CIV* 2009:57).

As regards the practicalities of employment policy, the resources for building job seeker capability and matching them with employers and training avenues are best managed locally, as is the use of seed funding for job creation. The principle of subsidiarity suggests that government should trust community-based professional bodies to use public funding well, through informed decision-making that is highly responsive to diverse client needs, potential and readiness for work. Pope Benedict XVI points out that, as well as observing the principle of subsidiarity, such a high-trust approach is consistent with the CST principles of the dignity of work, participation, solidarity, shared responsibility and human dignity (*DCE* 2005:26).

### *Economic growth, employment policy and the environment*

Employment policy has an environmental sustainability aspect. Economic growth and local job creation, in local industries or in large-scale tourism, for example, can affect vulnerable ecosystems if its impacts are not mitigated and managed well. In cities, large polluting infrastructure developments such as motorways are often established in low-income

neighbourhoods. They provide access to workplaces, but add environmental injustice to the socio-economic injustice already experienced by relatively powerless communities.

Such injustice contravenes several CST principles. In conjunction with the subsidiarity principle, some advocates promote a 'return to scale,' involving localised models of development, to secure communities' engagement in the processes that affect them (Schumacher 1973; Ziman 2003; Shiva 2005; McKibben 2007). They advise that local experts are best placed to advise on, and advocate against, potential negative impacts in their communities. For CST, the aim of employment policy – of all social policy in fact – should be to ensure just sustainability by removing impediments to human development, while protecting the environment upon which we depend.

#### *The connections between housing and employment policies*

The combined impacts of the housing and employment policies indicate inconsistencies in policy norms and assumptions. Acceptance of the NAIRU as an economic necessity actually contradicts (while being held in concert with) a widespread political view that all can succeed in the market economy and participate effectively in society, given the right incentives. Insufficient income, through unemployment or receipt of very low wages, affects housing access and affordability. It is, therefore, contrary to the human dignity, family centrality and fair wage principles of CST.

Homelessness and structural unemployment are both unethical and represent social immorality in CST terms. They can be alleviated by making different political and public policy choices. The foregoing comparison of existing policies with the principles of CST suggests that the latter provide moral

signposts for achieving an ethical policy mix in the future. The implications of applying them are examined during the fieldwork phase of this research.

### **8.5 Systems and instruments that support CST**

In considering the grounding of CST principles in today's society and their potential for influencing public policy in the future, we need to examine the relationships and systems through which they are promulgated. Two sets of relationships were explored – firstly the connections between church and state in New Zealand's secular liberal democracy, and secondly the Catholic education system which has established for itself a respected place within the governance framework of national education policy. The relevance of each has been assessed, theoretically at this point, and later during the research fieldwork, in terms of its ability to support the potential of CST to influence the public policy system. The literature is synthesised below.

#### *The relationship between church and state in New Zealand*

The church/state relationship forms the backdrop to this research because of its enduring significance in New Zealand society. While ours is an explicitly secular society, inherited Christian/ Catholic values affect the assumptions of our constitutional conventions and policy-making processes (Stenhouse 2000:12; Ahdar 2001; Sweetman 2002; King 2004). The potential for an ethical approach to policy remains, but the moral principles often seem lost in translation to everyday reality (Ahdar 2000:70; Williams 2004; Eastham 2005: 4-8; Cullinane 2005a).

The church's ability to attract the attention of communities of voters is an indicator of its likely ability, in a secular environment where all ideas are

contestable, to influence politics and policy systems. *Gaudium et Spes* clarifies which matters are for the state and which are more effectively dealt with by the church. It also identifies avenues for them to work together for mutually beneficial ends (GS 1965:42-4; also see Massaro 2000a:171-180; DCE 2005:28; CIV 2009:56).

In *Faithful Citizenship* (USCCB 2003a) employment, financial security, housing, the environment and citizenship are identified as policy domains where the CST perspective can make a valid contribution to policy debate. Similar sentiments are expressed by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops in their statement *Church in the World* (Orsman and Zwart (eds) 1997). For this research, Bishops' statements on labour relations and employment, structural unemployment, the right to decent housing and the impact and immorality of homelessness are all pertinent (Boston and Cameron 1994:19; Williams 1997, 2004; Ahdar and Stenhouse 2000:108; Cullinane 2005a).

The links between moral principles and political imperatives suggest that the separation of church and state, while recognised legislatively, may not be as extreme in reality as is commonly assumed. In *Centesimus Annus* (1991) the Pope comments that CST provides a counterbalance to the immorality of contemporary culture and a moral reference point in times of crisis (CA 1991:43; also see Valley 1998:154-5; DCE 2005:28).

### *The Catholic schooling system and education for citizenship*

As illustrated in Chapter 5, Catholic education is a seedbed or instrument for the development of CST as a framework for its students, who are the civic leaders and social participants of the future. Its formative influence prepares them for morally sound citizenship (USCCB 1998a). Past generations of Catholic students, taught by religious orders, have been imbued with the

CST principles. Many have then gravitated to leadership roles in public life, to service-oriented careers and to social justice advocacy roles. Because CST advocacy and political influence need to be sustained to have significant impact, this research has sought views as to where the next generation of CST-imbued advocates for just sustainability will originate.

Theoretical research indicates that the strength of the Catholic schooling system lies in its special character, comprising a ‘charism’ unique to each school and reflecting the principles of its religious founder. The CST values common to all of them include respect for people, commitment to service, environmental stewardship, justice, reconciliation and compassion (O’Donnell 2000:17). Research interviews with Catholic educators canvass the extent to which these values are embedded and inculcated in students through the schools’ curricula, teaching practices and role modelling.

## **8.6 CST and public policy processes**

Policy advice underpins decision-making in constitutional democracies. The Westminster convention holds that advice must be ‘free, frank and fearless,’ with assurances of political neutrality on the part of public servants. It is complemented by an option for ministers to obtain other advice from their own political advisers (Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:162-3).

### *Catholic Social Teaching and the locus of power*

Policy advice and the responsibility for developing it give public servants unique input at the centre of government to influence the policy agenda, the debate, the options and the decisions. Programme resource allocation, client needs analysis and case management have a similar impact in local offices



(Lipsky 1980; Hill 2005:163-5; 242-5). A key issue for this research is the exercise of power – by whom, where and how equitably. The locus of power affects resourcing decisions and policy outcomes. This is a key concern of CST, addressed in all the social encyclicals. *Pacem in Terris* (1965:136) and *Deus Caritas Est* (2005:28), separated by four decades, both illustrate enduring CST concern with the abuse of power.

Power can be decentralised and community-based or held by elites and bureaucrats. It is exercised by politicians and can be mediated by interest groups such as the business community (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:68-71). These scenarios produce different outcomes in terms of just sustainability (Agyeman *et al* 2003; Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:173-4). Among the CST documents, *Iustitia in Mundo* (1971) stresses that moral leadership should underwrite systemic change. This document explains the guidance role of CST and its propensity for influencing legitimate power-brokers as well as challenging the unjust use of power.

The role, power and ethics of the bureaucracy are important for this research. Since officials both develop and implement policy, their values shape policies (Howlett and Ramesh 2003:65-84; Hill 2005:163, 240-50). Subjectivity on the part of policy analysts is inevitable, as they articulate the policy agendas chosen by those who allocate resources and have the power to enact their preferences (Considine 1994:3-4; Bridgman and Davis 2000:4). So policy is driven by the parts of the system with most power and systemically entrenched values prevail. Policy alternatives and the ethics of trade-offs are given greater or lesser exposure according to personal and institutional preconceptions (Considine 1994:6; Weimer and Vining 1999; Heywood 2002:403). Yet there is a commonly held view that: ‘most policy analysts prefer to ... accept their clients’ [organisations’] normative perspective as a given’ (Amy 1984:580).

Among the social encyclicals, *Centesimus Annus* (1991) provides the most comprehensive CST perspective on the moral standing of the political stances which underpin policy interventions. Interestingly though, right wing and left wing commentators both claimed that the encyclical supports their political stances. The Pope actually stated that neither liberal capitalism nor socialist totalitarianism was morally sound. For CST it was a case of working with capitalism as the lesser of two evils (CA 1991:35, 42; also see Basile 1998). Global discussion following the release of *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) has also been punctuated with political debate, despite the focus of this encyclical on systemic ethics rather than political detail. The concerns of the latest encyclical are inherently political.

#### *CST and public trust in policy-making*

Political philosophy and policy development concern relationships between the individual, the family and the state. The extent to which citizens trust our public institutions and leaders differs from CST norms of civic engagement and social participation. The decline of trust in government is a worldwide phenomenon, exacerbated by the dominance of political systems focused on individual freedom at the expense of civic responsibility, environmental protection and social concern (CA 1991:47-8; CIV 2009:23-5, 41).

Public policy always has a normative dimension reflecting society's values. The norms for a new policy should be identified in its initial evaluation phase. 'Policy-makers analyse *what is*, and what *might be*, to ascertain what *should be*,' according to criteria set down by the government of the day (Heywood 2002:411, 417; also see Considine 1994:6; Shaw and Eichbaum 2005:6). For policy to have ethical coherence, it should be evaluated for intended effects and possible inadvertent impacts, prior to implementation. The ethics of such impacts should be built into the design and application of

policy evaluation projects, irrespective of concerns among officials about ‘value-laden policymaking’ (Amy 1984:582). In the New Zealand setting, often because of political pressures on timing, this step is often neglected (SSC 1999a:25-9; Wolf 1999:14-5; Baehler 2003:31-3).

When the CST principles are expressed by local Bishops as middle axioms, they aim to clarify desirable policy outcomes, while leaving open the choice of specific policy responses. Norms for housing policy, for example, should state the policy intention for everyone to have access to affordable and appropriate housing, with no homelessness. In the employment domain, all those who want to work should be able to find suitable, equitably-paid jobs. Housing and employment policies in New Zealand both demonstrate policy failure with ethical implications, due to adverse impacts on vulnerable communities and on the environment. This suggests the need for an explicit focus on the morality of policy outcomes and impacts to be built into policy needs analysis, design, implementation and evaluation (Massaro 1998, 2000; Turner 2003:41; Hudson and Lowe 2004:230-1, Hicks 2007).

New Zealand’s dominant policy development model is based on economic rationalism, deductive logic and systematic problem-solving (Bardach 2000), while maintaining ‘silence on the normative dimensions of policymaking’ (Shaw and Eichbaum 2008:32) Our public policy analysis and development treats presenting issues as problems (SSC 1999a:7). Standard policy terminology reinforces this – through the language of ‘systemic breakdowns,’ ‘funding cuts,’ ‘policy failure,’ ‘gaps,’ ‘disparities’ and ‘problem resolution,’ although in the past decade there has been some recognition of the need to abandon ‘deficit thinking’ (Gergen 1994) in favour of a search for human potential and developmental opportunities.

The problem-solving model risks treating clients as the objects of policy rather than acknowledging them as self-determining subjects of it, which

runs counter to CST stances on human dignity, personal moral agency and authentic development (*MM* 1963:219; *LE* 1981:6). Through being on the receiving end of patronising policy interventions, vulnerable people are disempowered and effectively disenfranchised (Dominelli 1997:7; Vallely 1998:164; Bishop and Glynn 1999:53). The problem-solving paradigm can also result in a rigid approach to policy development, risking foreclosure on opportunities to do things differently (Baehler 2003:37-8). As such, it represents a systemic avenue of investigation for CST-oriented social analysts and other critical thinkers who are sufficiently concerned to promote alternatives to it.

Alternatives to the problem-solving paradigm show promise for inclusion in the policy developer's array of intervention tools. Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider 1986) represents one optional approach to strategic planning and organisational development. It uses envisioning techniques that are highly relevant to public policy development and might even afford it some ethics-based constructive creativity. It has been used developmentally by the Catholic Church (Paddock 2003) and has established credibility in diverse organisational contexts worldwide (Hammond and Royal 2001). As the chosen fieldwork methodology for this research, it is described fully in Chapter 9 to follow.

## **Part Two**

### **Grounding: Research methods and fieldwork**

For theory to serve a realistic purpose, it needs to be grounded in people's experiences and to be applied to the resolution of emergent issues. Then it can contribute in a practical way to our accumulated wisdom from the recent and distant past. Knowledge should be shared and applied to the common good, to serve people and their communities.

Part Two of this project has evolved from a sustained sharing of knowledge. Community voices are heard, as co-operative momentum brings the aforementioned theories and principles to life. There is a flood of questions. Which theories are valid, for whom, when and why? Which ones would help to make our society more just? Why does this matter? Which ideas best represent what we believe should underpin this country's development, both domestically and as a global citizen?

The two chosen domains of knowledge, namely Catholic Social Teaching and public policy-making are now fused in an Appreciative Inquiry, to consider the above questions and many others emanating from them. For chosen groupings of expert stakeholders in the ethics and impacts of public policy, is there scope in CST to inform and guide decisions in the public arena which have major impacts on people's lives? Can CST help to engender hope within and among us for a justly sustainable future?

Part Two firstly outlines the fieldwork methodology and design. Then it captures the findings from 38 detailed semi-structured interviews. The participants' insights are invaluable – for the honesty and energy with which they have been imparted and for the commitments to creating a better future for all, which motivate people trying to 'do good' in our communities.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Research methodology**

This chapter encapsulates my process for establishing connections between the principles of CST and the ethics of public policy outcomes. It explores the social constructionist approach to systemic change known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI), in terms of its assumptions, principles and methods. It outlines techniques of appreciative interviewing and connects Appreciative Inquiry to projects already undertaken in the Catholic Church.

Appreciative Inquiry is the theoretical perspective for the research fieldwork. Its basic premise is that since systems and organisations are created by people, they can also be changed by them. AI is grounded in ‘vocabularies of hope’ which encourage positive change (Ludema 2001). It is ‘heliotropic,’ seeking potential in societies and organisations. It offers a contrast to the perceived negativity of the more commonly-applied deficit models and problem-solving frameworks (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987).

AI has spiritual and aspirational dimensions which resonate with themes of transcendence, hope and authentic development in Catholic Social Teaching (Paddock 2003:10). Communities, societies, organisations and policy actors all have potential in their work to achieve ethical and sustainable outcomes. They can all choose to reframe their assumptions and processes to move away from individual acquisitiveness, institutional convenience, political expediency and policy instrumentalism, in the interests of just sustainability. The combination of CST and AI may have potential to stimulate them in the direction of making such choices.

## **9.1 Reframing public policy outcomes**

Public policy could be reframed to prioritise the ethics of just sustainability, using the principles of CST as the criteria for evaluating progress towards this outcome. Such reframing requires reflection on the analytical methods through which the CST and public policy discourses have each achieved credibility. It requires potential links to be identified. Then it requires an indication of the specific methods intended for this research project.

As the foregoing chapters indicate, CST embodies a normative ethical position originating from papal guidance statements expressing a set of moral principles. Popes, Bishops and their advisers consider the ‘signs of the times’ and develop ethical positions on the causes of social problems. As expressions of papal views, the social encyclicals guide the Bishops in the development of ‘middle axioms’, which are needed for the principles to be applied to local settings. Because CST application is contextual, the effectiveness of the middle axioms depends on the clarity, timeliness and relevance of the Bishops’ pastoral statements to local concerns.

The dominant CST paradigm for resolution of moral deficits such as social and environmental injustice is a top-down problem-solving one. In the policy-making arena the process is similarly centralised and hierarchical. Problems are identified, evidence obtained, options developed and ministers make decisions. While the formal policy development methods are claimed to be logical, rational and systematic, justly sustainable outcomes may be neither sought, nor achieved. Housing unaffordability, unemployment and environmental damage, for instance, all remain New Zealand realities.



A reframing of desired outcomes can be achieved through AI. This paradigm represents a fresh approach to public policy development, its ethics and its normative principles. It involves imagining, agreeing and expressing the best outcomes possible and designing the system to move towards them, as plants turn towards the sunlight. It requires genuine consultation and power-sharing with affected communities so that their goals can be integrated with policy decisions.

The proponents of AI consider it a distinctive theoretical perspective, rather than a methodology. As such, it is supported by a five-stage developmental methodology involving discovery of what is; dream of what could be; design of what should be; a chosen destiny or what will be; and delivery on undertakings (Cooperrider *et al* 2003:30; Paddock 2003:40). AI focuses on strengths and opportunities rather than weaknesses and problems. Community engagement and data interpretation take place within a social constructionist and appreciative epistemology. This epistemology shapes AI participants' assumptions about how meaning is created, as they cooperate in imagining new possibilities and creating new realities (Crotty 1998:3).

## **9.2 Creating meaning through social constructionism**

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge developed during the 1960s by Berger and Luckman and presented in their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967). It states that people cooperate to create shared reality, interpreting the circumstances in which they find themselves,

through language which captures their common knowledge and assumptions about the world and their place in it.

This perception of reality generates dynamism. Crotty (1998:56) notes that ‘the process of bringing these social realities into being is one with the process of interpreting and reinterpreting them.’ Social reality is constantly being created, refined and adapted to changing circumstances through iterative interpretations that create new meanings. Reality is shaped by people’s family environments, experiences, and education. It is also shaped by social and linguistic convention, cultural context and the store of knowledge built up in the community to which they belong (Berger and Luckman 1967:151; Gergen 1990; Burr 2003). Diverse cultural groups have different realities. This requires society at large to recognise pluralism in expectation, viewpoint and social behaviour.

Social constructionism is consistent with a post-modernist<sup>i</sup> view of the world. Social values in this view are historically and culturally contingent (May 1997:16). Modernist objectivity and universal truths are modified by values which are ‘relative to time and place’ and which can change (ibid). Social constructionism embodies these epistemological assumptions, which in turn drive the relational focus, the focus on language to create reality and the visionary generative energy of Appreciative Inquiry.

The interface between CST and post-modernism is a structural and methodological issue for this thesis. Pope Paul VI (*OA* 1971) engaged with historical contingency and social context in applying CST, while Pope John Paul II (*FR* 1998) was more concerned with universal truths, in the face of what he considered post-modernist moral relativism. Hobgood (1991) and

Elsbernd (1995) both thought these differing papal approaches created methodological confusion for CST and its social analysis. Any apparent conflict can be resolved, however, by invoking a ‘both/ and’ approach, rather than being hindered by a more rigid ‘either/ or.’ In practice (as Section 9.5 elucidates) this means understanding the universal and timeless moral principles and distinguishing these from their applications, which are time-bound and culturally contingent. The contextual nature of social constructionism can assist with searches for workable consensus on the application of ethics in pluralist societies.

### **9.3 Appreciative Inquiry**

AI works from a social constructionist epistemology. Over the past 25 years, Cooperrider and others have developed AI as ‘a vital and empowering thesis that societies and organizations are made and imagined, which means, of course, that they can be remade and reimagined’ (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva 1995:157). Referring to Gergen (1990), they comment that organisations and systems are ‘products of human interaction and social construction rather than some anonymous expression of an underlying natural order.’ In the words of its seminal authors, Appreciative Inquiry is:

.. A search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organization, or society as a whole (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987 Part 2:5).

Through the use of one-on-one appreciative interviews, it is possible to elicit what ‘gives life’ to the entity under consideration. Its members ‘create and discover new social possibilities that can enrich [their] existence and give it meaning’ (ibid:9) They reflect on and affirm their experiences, to

define the organisation's highest and best realities. From the synthesis of these stories, themes are drawn out, to guide the participants as they shape their future, based on the best of the past. The process:

Appreciates the best of what is, to ignite intuition of the possible, and then firmly unites the two logically, caringly and passionately into a theoretical hypothesis of an envisioned future (ibid).

Through appreciating shared narratives, positive images and affirmative conversations, the group members can find common ground. In sharing its collective values and dreams, and often by expressing them metaphorically, the group can generate images that reveal the higher ground to which it aspires. It can determine its course of action and make the commitments needed for goal achievement (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Cooperrider and Whitney 2000; Watkins and Mohr 2001).

### *Shaping positive and hopeful realities*

Social constructionist theory holds that if a group focuses on its strengths and decides to reinforce them continuously its weaknesses will become irrelevant (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Cooperrider *et al* 2003). The work of the Catholic theologian Ludema (2001) on the 'vocabularies of hope' offers an alternative to the language of deficit and illustrates the change management potential of AI as a theoretical perspective based on hope and reverence for life. According to Ludema (2001:5):

These hopeful images of the future ... become powerful catalysts for change and transformation by mobilizing the moral, social and relational energies needed to translate vision into reality and belief into practice.

Through a process of ‘normative dialogue and collective visioning’ hopeful images of the future are created. In developing them, the group begins to move towards their achievement (ibid:10). In recent times, Pope Benedict XVI has reinforced the centrality of hope for human aspiration in his second encyclical *Spe Salvi* (2007). He reinforces ‘reverence for life,’ a motivation shared with AI, in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), his social encyclical.

### *The assumptions and principles of Appreciative Inquiry*

Appreciative Inquiry is based on social constructionist assumptions about how meaning is created through human interpretation of circumstances. According to Hammond (1998:20-1) these AI assumptions are that:

1. In every society, organization or group, something works
2. What we focus on becomes our reality
3. Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities
4. The act of asking questions of ... a group influences the group in some way
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known)
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past
7. It is important to value differences
8. The language we use creates our reality

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987:7) identify eight core principles of AI. These are:

1. **The constructionist principle** – that interaction through language creates reality
2. **The collaborative principle** – that participants in social processes create the future together
3. **The anticipatory principle** – that articulating change causes it to happen
4. **The provocative principle** – that powerful images challenge current thinking

5. **The poetic principle** – that organisations and systems are open books where the interpersonal dynamics can be understood through the use of metaphor
6. **The positive principle** – that people and organisations move in the direction on which they focus their attention
7. **The simultaneity principle** – that inquiry and change happen concurrently
8. **The pragmatic principle** – that new ideas must be needed, relevant and applicable for them to gather momentum

Ludema links the AI principles to his belief that hope is sustained through right relationships. The anticipatory and provocative principles suggest that hope lives through imagination. The poetic and positive principles evoke the life-giving force of affirmative dialogue which generates hope for the future. Simultaneity and pragmatism suggest that hopeful processes of inquiry and change have the capacity to generate new images to sustain life-giving forces (Ludema 2001:11). These connections link Appreciative Inquiry to Catholicism, in which hope is named as one of the virtues, in which ‘The present is touched by future reality’ (SS 2007:7).

Some interview questions for this research were designed to elicit participants’ views on the combined potential of CST and AI to generate systemic policy change in the interests of just sustainability. During the appreciative interviews, interviewees had the opportunity to consider the use of Appreciative Inquiry as the means to identify the ‘best of the best’ for ethical improvements to policy systems, in terms of the principles of CST.

### *Appreciative Inquiry and problem-solving*

The principles and assumptions of AI can mould the manner in which change management projects are created and specific inquiries are shaped.

Some authors such as Hammond (1998) believe that AI does not work at all in a problem-solving paradigm. Others such as Watkins and Mohr (2001) acknowledge the problem as a valid part of current reality, and then reframe it to fit within an appreciative approach (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Hammond 1998; Cooperrider and Whitney 2000). This research subscribes to the latter view as being the more realistic, hopeful and grounded.

In both views, however, the terminology of deficit thinking is repudiated. Gergen (1994) is emphatic about this, referring to deficit vocabularies that have produced a 'progressive infirmity' in society – compounding problems rather than alleviating them – on the basis that we perpetuate what we focus upon. AI uses 'provocative propositions' or possibility statements expressed in the present tense, to ensure that the 'positive core' or life-giving energy in a system is perpetuated (Cooperrider *et al* 2003:143).

During the early iterations of AI, charges of unreality and impracticability were laid at the feet of its developers (Bushe 2007). Some evaluators have expressed disquiet that the AI approach lacks balance in terms of risks or constraints as well as possibilities for transformative change. In their evaluative commentary on AI, Rogers and Fraser suggest that metaphorical plants might well grow towards the sunlight, but the growth might be uneven if all aspects of an organisational or policy development issue, including the negative ones, do not receive equal weighting:

Appreciative Inquiry is based on a seductively plausible model: that by highlighting the positive, we can help bring about the positive outcomes we describe ... But if the development is lopsided, some necessary issues might be ignored (Rogers and Fraser 2003:75).

The AI response to this is based on the belief that we can create our own futures by our attitudes to change and by the decisions we make today. AI practitioners point to evidence from two decades of successful large-scale change in diverse fields and locations (Hammond and Royal 2001).

### *The five 'D' components of Appreciative Inquiry*

The methodology for AI was originally designed with four components – ‘discover,’ ‘dream,’ ‘design,’ ‘deliver’ (Cooperider *et al* 2003:30). The ‘delivery’ component was amended to ‘destiny’ which reflected the aspirational goals of an AI project more effectively (ibid:177). Later the ‘delivery’ aspect was reintroduced by other AI practitioners, to provide assurance (to result-focused managers, among others) that there would actually be positive outcomes or ‘deliverables’ from the change processes.

Many contemporary AI projects now have five ‘D’ components, and some include a sixth at the outset, namely ‘define’. The 5D model – ‘discover’ ‘dream’ ‘design’ ‘destiny’ ‘deliver’ – is used in the expert interview design for the interactive section of this research. The project scope has already been ‘defined’ in the overall research design. The AI process unfolds through the five ‘D’ components. As shown in the *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* (Cooperrider *et al* 2003), each project inquiry specifies its parameters and the desired change, and then seeks to:

1. **Discover what is** and appreciate what gives life
2. **Dream** or imagine **what might be**
3. **Design** the future through determining **what should be**
4. Create the **Destiny** or **what will be** once systemic change occurs
5. **Deliver** collaboratively to make a positive difference



*Applying the 'D' components in this research project*

The **discovery** phase seeks a grounded view of the 'best of the best' already achieved by the organisation (or for this research, by the operations of the public policy system). AI asserts that in every system, including that relating to policy development, there is something that works; something we want enhanced and expanded. Grounding is achieved through reflection on actual successes and difficulties overcome, as acknowledged by the participants.

In the **dream** phase, the interviewees are invited to consider gaps in public policy as opportunities for strengthening it, and to envision ways by which this might be achieved. Pragmatism is attained through reflection on what needs to be changed in housing and employment policies, and why, to achieve just sustainability. The product from this phase is a set of hopeful and aspirational vision statements to shape the design of policy initiatives.

The **design** phase in the appreciative interviews brings the dream into reality by emphasising the normative aspects of public policy. Why should policy aim for just sustainability? How should it be achieved? How should the ethical principles of CST be applied to housing and employment policy development? The design phase requires that 'provocative propositions' be articulated, to provide a 'compelling picture of how things will be when the positive core is fully effective' (Cooperrider *et al* 2003:142).

The **destiny** phase connects the dream and its vision statements with the design phase and its provocative proposition, which states how reality is and will be, according to the principle of simultaneity. What positive difference will we see if systemic change is made? The goal of the destiny phase is to ‘ensure that the dream can be realized’ (ibid:176). It involves creation of what will be, through the definition of objectives, commitment to action plans and allocation of resources. This research involves stakeholders from diverse organisations which are not jointly accountable for policy outcomes, so the destiny phase synthesises what should be aspired to, in terms of just sustainability. This phase also provides cues for policy-makers to take responsibility for housing and employment policy enhancements within their areas of influence.

**Delivery** in this research articulates what will make a difference in the public policy system for those affected by its decisions. This differs from an AI conducted in a group where the members have continuing mutual accountability. In an AI to support organisational change, for example, ‘delivery’ means that undertakings are met collaboratively, desired changes are effected, and a culture of ongoing inquiry becomes embedded. The potential for this to occur in the public policy system is explored with the interviewees, but its realisation is outside the scope of this research project.

The potential of AI to generate hopeful, aspirational and transformative change has become increasingly evident through successive projects based on it. Its congruence with Catholic moral aspirations is apparent in AI projects already undertaken by the Church. To engender a sense of the AI methodological similarities with the Catholic approach to social analysis, the evolution of the latter is now considered.

## 9.5 Catholic social analysis

Methodological tensions in secular philosophy and in social science between theoretical perspectives such as positivism<sup>ii</sup>, and interpretivism<sup>iii</sup> have parallels in the frameworks used in Catholicism to define moral signposts and articulate their relevance to society. The Catholic debate demonstrates two views, each with contemporary adherents. One of these views perpetuates traditional natural law principles articulated for Catholicism by St Thomas Aquinas concerning timeless divine order in the universe (Sigmund 1988:xxvi). This view is supported by an authoritative moral code, with theological principles promulgated through papal and episcopal guidance (Courtney Murray 1960; Curran and McCormick 1986; Duncan 1991; *CIV* 2009:59).

The alternative view, which entered Catholic thinking at the time of the Second Vatican Council (1963-65), is that social morality mediated by the CST principles is historically contingent. In *Gaudium et Spes* (Pope Paul VI 1965:4) Church leaders were asked to observe and interpret the ‘signs of the times’ so that their guidance related to the practical concerns of recipient communities (Dorr 1992; Curran 2002:55-60; Vallely 1998:160). In his guidance, Pope Paul VI moved away from a ‘static, ahistorical view’ to let the Church respond to local concerns with local solutions (Mich 1998:180; also see Curran 2002). As his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* indicates, open-minded dialogue was the method he chose to achieve this (*ES* 1964:65;78).

In *Octagesima Adveniens* (1971:4) the Pope noted further that ‘In the face of ... widely varying situations, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message

and to put forward a solution which has universal validity.’ This was not leadership abrogation, but an affirmation of the essential place of local context in applying CST principles. Pope Paul VI made it clear, however, that social contextualisation was to be achieved without diluting core CST tenets such as human dignity, the place of work in human development and the responsibility of society to care for vulnerable people (OA:5,12,18; Mich 1998:179, 262; Merkle 2001:253; Curran 2003:197).

Dorr (1992:218) notes that the methodological change for CST proposed by Pope Paul VI requires acceptance ‘that if one is to discover universal principles about social morality, one must start from the variety of cultural and geographical situations in which moral issues arise.’ This suggests the appropriateness of an inductive analytical approach, which reverses the deductive logic used when working from an avowed general position to its local application (Baum 1989:67; Davies 1998:59; Massaro 2001:4; Curran 2002:54, 95).

During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, the magisterial emphasis in CST reverted to a basis in natural law. Curran (2003:190) expressed doubts about ‘the extent to which Pope John Paul II [was] committed to historical consciousness.’ Instead of Cardinal Cardijn’s ‘see, judge, act’ framework of action-reflection, the Pope, in *Laborem Exercens* (1981), reversed the process to ‘judge, see, act,’ believing that the universal moral truth was already there, ready to be applied consistently (Mich 1998:254). Pope Benedict XVI reaffirms the prioritisation of universal truth (CIV 2009:59). In a key document *Whatever Happened to Octagesima Adveniens?* Elsbernd (1995) suggests that Pope John Paul II’s condemnation of ‘relativism’ effectively repudiated the broader contextualised social analysis supported by Pope Paul VI. The issue is both doctrinal and methodological. In

*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:8) Pope John Paul II talks about how doctrinal principles should be accepted *a priori* in local situations, rather than being generated from inductive community reflection.

Conversely, Elsbernd (1995:22) suggests that ‘the credibility and integrity of Catholic Social Teaching requires that it retrieve the fundamental insights sketched in *Gaudium et Spes* and elaborated in *Octogesima Adveniens*.’ She feels that ‘local discernment has been separated from the development of social teaching as a whole and is relegated to the action phase alone’ (Elsbernd 1995:19), creating tensions within CST and in its social analysis. The strength and endurance of CST comes from its universal moral norms for human behavior in all communities at all times. Yet there are substantial areas of CST application where critical thinking<sup>iv</sup> is needed for sensitive and relevant local applications which acknowledge the ‘signs of the times.’

#### *A methodology for historically contingent social analysis*

Holland and Henriot (1983) offer a values-based and historically contingent structure for social analysis to assist with CST guidance for communities. Their method is useful for ‘reading the signs of the times’ to alleviate social injustice, through the use of a ‘pastoral circle’ based on Cardijn’s ‘see-judge-act’ process (ibid:14). Through the use of ‘root metaphors’, and, after Freire (1972), they elicit ‘generative themes’ from which suggestions for structural and systemic improvement can be made (Holland and Henriot 1983:22-5). They suggest that social analysis is useful both for reinforcing positive themes, and for solving problems (ibid 1983:103-4).

Overlain on the debate about universality and historical contingency is the political nature of CST, due to its concerns with justice in resource allocation. Local CST interpretations of normative government roles are coloured as much by political ideology as by moral rectitude. The two are often conflated, as commentary on *Caritas in Veritate* illustrates. Moral/political blending adds to the complexity of evaluating the ethical status of government policies in plural societies (Curran 2002; Novak 1986, 1993; Massaro 1998:56; Schall 2005; Mirus 2009). Indeed, one might recall MacIntyre's (1988) questions – 'Whose justice? Which rationality?'

Massaro (1998) rejects an ideological approach to social analysis, in favour of empowering communities to reflect on the CST principles and use them to develop their own positions on social justice. Following Rawls (1971/1999), he looks for an 'overlapping consensus' to find the areas of common ground. He seeks a platform on which chosen strategies will cater for pluralism while finding workable agreement on the common good in social policy (Massaro 1998:178-9). This may, or may not, be fully achievable but without trying, we will never know its potential for good.

## **9.5 The use of Appreciative Inquiry in the Catholic Church**

During a period of turmoil in the Church, Paddock, a psychologist convert to Catholicism, asked whether anyone had thought to explore the strengths of the institution and the reasons for its enduring global influence, rather than focusing on what had gone wrong within its ranks. In a brief but significant publication (Paddock 2003), she outlined AI and illustrated its successful applications in revitalising Catholic parishes, governance bodies, social services and educational institutions.

A comparison of the philosophical foundations of AI and CST identifies similarities, which influenced my rationale for the use of AI in the interactive part of this research project. In her work, Paddock (2003:4) explored how Catholic leaders could ‘move beyond a focus on symptoms to a dialogue about the life-giving forces of the Church.’ As outlined in her chapter on ‘compatibility’ between AI and Catholicism, AI provides the methodology to achieve ‘deeper dialogue.’ CST stresses ‘right order’ (QA 1931:79) and ‘building right relationships’ among people, while AI generates positive social realities through human interactions (Paddock 2003:10).

‘Every person is precious’ according to CST (USCCB 1998b) and morality is based on ‘reverence for life’ (CIV 2009). AI is also based on ‘reverence for life’ (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987). CST emphasises the ‘right and duty to participate in society,’ while AI speaks of the right to ‘equality of voice without censorship.’ ‘Solidarity’ in CST is paralleled by ‘sharing’ in AI. The CST search for the ‘common good’ is similar to the AI search for ‘the true, the good and the possible.’

Both paradigms thrive on hope, generated through respect, affirmation, active listening, appreciation and a focus on the ‘highest and best’ – in both the ethical and organisational senses (Paddock 2003:10). AI focuses on transformation, while CST views this as a means to the greater end of transcendence (ibid:12; Banaga 2001:261; Ludema 2001:7-8).

## 9.6 Reflections on Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology

While the AI literature contains many evaluations of organisational change projects, I have not found much documented critique of AI itself. Most material in the *Appreciative Inquiry Commons* emanating from its developers and proponents is laudatory. As with any methodology, however, it does have limitations and constraints. Evaluation commentary indicates that it is more effective in some areas and for some purposes than it is for others (Rogers and Fraser 2003) and there is a small body of critique focusing on some of its basic assumptions (Patton 2003; Barge and Oliver 2003; Van der Haar and Hosking 2004, Kien 2006). There is also, interestingly, a slightly larger body of work suggesting that the effectiveness of AI can be enhanced by combining it with other methodologies, including those based on different paradigms (Rogers and Fraser 2003).

The most frequently noted critique of AI is that its orientation to strengths and successes means that problems and challenges may be glossed over or even ignored. Queries surface along the lines of: 'Does the positive bias seemingly inherent in Appreciative Inquiry get in the way of honesty and neutrality? What about the problems?' (Catsambas and Webb 2003:49). Van der Haar and Hosking (2004:1025) observe that: 'The claim that a "positive" orientation is necessary seems to beg the question of what is positive and to assume that sufficient unforced agreement can be achieved on the matter.' Appreciation and imposition are mutually exclusive.



There is a distinction between ‘positive’ (approval of something) and ‘appreciative’ (understanding the significance of something, including its less salutary aspects) (Preskill and Catsambas 2006:76). Appreciative reframing of issues to emphasise hope and possibility rather than deficit and blame means that AI ‘explores what might be if change is made’ (ibid:26). From known strength comes the resource to change what does not work.

In projects commented upon in the literature, the ‘Dream’ phase of AI is said to produce insight into what does not work well, through people’s expressions of ‘what might be.’ Contrasts between realities and aspirations indicate where difficulties exist and improvements are sought. Casework evidence, such as that collated in Preskill and Coghlan (2003) suggests that AI can help people address identified problems. Patton comments on the AI balance between what does, and does not, work in organisations or systems: ‘Appreciative Inquiry has been criticized for being unbalanced and uncritical in its emphasis ... an unwillingness to look at weaknesses, problems and things that are going wrong’ (Patton 2003:91). He contends, and I agree, that there is: ‘strong evidence that problems and weaknesses can and do emerge in an appreciation-centered inquiry.’

Bushe’s comment (2007:2) that: ‘Engaging people in collective problem-solving tends to leave the current organization culture intact,’ causes one to reflect on why the problem-solving model dominates the policy system. It is safe and unthreatening to established norms. On the other hand, though, focusing together appreciatively on aspirations establishes common ground and enables conflicting interest groups to generate workable strategies. This does not mean ignoring problems,

which should be addressed as they surface. Bushe (2007:5) suggests that the way to achieve appreciative change is ‘to make a space for inquiry into hurt, anger, injustice, despair – doing that in a way that contributes to the group’s ability to understand, and bring into being, its collective aspirations.’

In similar vein, Barge and Oliver (2003:137) advise that in their assessment of AI, they: ‘Reframed the notion of appreciation, from having a fixed meaning of “being positive” to a more contingent meaning, where various linguistic constructions and forms of emotionality could be viewed as life enhancing.’ This approach seems realistic. It means that input that may seem negative can have helpful outcomes if it is shared in ways that value the working relationships among the contributors. There is no new learning to be had by suppressing people’s concerns, diverse opinions or ambiguity with preconceptions or rigid thinking. The point of appreciation is to open our minds to broader thinking about current realities and future possibilities.

Kien (2006:46) who is unconvinced about the fundamental assumptions of AI, suggests that ‘AI theorists falsely assume that AI could always be applied ... in any situation, no matter what the circumstances are.’ It is, however, one distinctive change management approach among many. Evaluation experts such as Rogers and Fraser (2003) and Patton (2003) identify where it can be used effectively and where other processes could precede it, replace it or work in conjunction with it.

From a programme evaluation perspective, Rogers and Fraser (2003:76) comment that AI is best used as one of several ‘components in our repertoire that can be combined as needed [and that are] not mutually exclusive.’ In their view, AI demonstrates a ‘mixed score’ with regard to three criteria, namely the ‘plausibility’ of its change management processes, the practicality of its implementation and the extent to which it can provide causal evidence of improvement. If the jury is still out, even after two decades, as regards AI causality, then the use of other techniques such as problem solving or critical thinking may help to anchor the AI processes, so that nothing crucial to organisational or programme success is overlooked just because it may appear negative (Grant and Humphries 2006).

In my view there is enough documented evidence that AI, as a motivator but not a panacea, stimulates creative thinking and new approaches to realities and potentials. For this reason, appreciative interviewing on a one-to-one basis, as the core building block of AI, is the bedrock for this research project. In my interviews with experts, the full AI methodology of ‘discover,’ ‘dream,’ ‘design,’ ‘destiny’ and ‘deliver’ is used to invite participants to generate images of a justly sustainable housing and employment policy future. From the stories and images generated, and from the principles of CST, positive themes are clustered into strategies to improve the assumptions and processes by which public policy is developed and applied in New Zealand. Chapter 10 now adds research design to the foregoing outline of project methodology, as a prelude to my work based on the appreciative interviews which constitute the research fieldwork.

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<sup>i</sup> Modernism is a theoretical perspective originating from the scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment. It supports logical positivism and analysis based solely on human reason. For some two hundred years it underpinned hierarchical industrial organisation and scientific inquiry and was considered 'synonymous with progress' (Crotty 1998:184). Post-modernism, on the other hand, repudiates the absolute convictions of modernism, viewing reality as ambiguous, fragmented, relativistic and socially constructed.

<sup>ii</sup> The positivist approach is the longest established tradition in social research. It follows the lines of inquiry common to the physical sciences – rational, logical, linear and systematic. Its assumption is that the social world is ordered in the same way as the natural one (Crotty 1998; Sarantakos 1998). According to this view, reality is physically evident and independent of people.

<sup>iii</sup> Interpretivism is a research approach which describes social reality as something created by people, rather than being an independent natural process to which humanity is subjected. It requires researchers to understand the diverse perspectives of individuals and groups (Crotty 1998; Davidson and Tolich 1999; Babbie 2001). In this view, reality is what people freely believe it is.

<sup>iv</sup> Critical thinking, also known as 'critical inquiry' and 'critical theory' is a social research approach focusing on power relationships in societies. It aims to challenge and change relationships which create injustice. It is action-oriented as well as theoretical, subscribing to a process of reflection followed by action, similar to the 'see-judge-act' methods of CST (Holland and Henriot 1983:8-10, 93-4). Its goals include social justice, equity and freedom from oppression (Crotty 1998:157-9). In this approach, reality is created by powerful people who force others to see the world as they do.

## Chapter Ten

### Towards Catholic Social Teaching in Practice: Fieldwork design

Would ethics-based design and implementation of public policy help reduce the injustices of structural unemployment, homelessness and environmental damage in New Zealand? Would the explicit use of the CST principles in policy-making provide effective guidance in the development of morally robust policies, to increase the likelihood of achieving justly sustainable outcomes? These are the key questions posed to the research participants in the fieldwork phase of this project.

#### *Designing social research*

Social science demonstrates diversity of opinion as to how various research elements should be classified. For the design of this project, I have used the four-element typology of Crotty (1998) as my foundation. Working from the particular to the general, Crotty classifies these elements as follows:

- **Methods** – the processes and techniques of data collection
- **Methodology** – the research design or strategy for action which determines the choice of methods and links them to the research purpose
- **Theoretical perspective** – the worldview or philosophical position which creates the logic for the research, determines the criteria by which data is analysed and informs the researcher's methodological choice
- **Epistemology** – the theory of knowledge which governs the researcher's assumptions about how meaning is created, and which becomes intrinsic to the theoretical perspective and the resulting methodology (Crotty 1998:3).

Working now from the general to the particular, Crotty's typology is applied to this research as indicated below:

- **Epistemology** – social constructionism (where a community's reality is created through social interaction and can be changed through the same means)
- **Theoretical perspectives** – appreciative inquiry, interpretivism, critical thinking
- **Methodology** – appreciative interviewing through the AI processes of discovery, dreaming, design, destiny and delivery
- **Method** – key informant and expert interviews

As outlined earlier, the theoretical basis for the study consists of the Social Encyclicals; analytical aspects of Catholic social theology; church/ state relationships; the place of CST in the Catholic schooling system; public policy theory, analysis and evaluation methodologies; and theories of social justice, environmental justice and just sustainability. The theories have been applied to employment and housing policy in order to identify gaps between the principles of CST and the (usually unstated) ethics of secular policy-making. Respondents were asked how such gaps might be reduced.

### **10.1 Scope of the interactive research**

The fieldwork phase of this study comprised expert interviews with Catholic Church leaders and educators, community-based advocates for social and environmental justice, policy developers, government agency social programme managers and central government politicians. The aim of the interviews was to test out the foregoing theoretical views and the applicability of the CST principles to real-life policy contexts.

All the discussions of CST for this project connected its key messages to the realities of employment and housing policy. Human dignity was the starting point. Social justice, the centrality of the family in society, the common good, solidarity with powerless people, freedom, rights, reciprocal responsibilities, the policy implications of cultural diversity and human obligations towards the natural world all featured in these conversations.

In seeking the potential for CST-based systemic change, the appreciative interviews canvassed the political dimensions and the economic settings in which policy-making takes place. Also covered were the responsibilities and relationships between public and private property; the dignity of work and the right of everyone who wants to work to have a job; the human right to appropriate and affordable housing; subsidiarity and its implications for the role of government in policy-making and resource allocation; and the ability for all to participate effectively in civil and political processes.

The systemic instruments for achieving CST outcomes, namely the church/state relationship and the Catholic education system in New Zealand were also canvassed with interviewees. This was done to identify actual and potential contributions of these factors to the achievement of morally sound public policy. The emphasis placed in the interviews on each of the above elements varied according to the specialities of the expert participants.

## **10.2 Themes from the interim theoretical synthesis**

Several significant themes emerged from the earlier theoretical work to define the actual and potential interface between CST and public policy. With its social justice origins and subsequent focus on the stewardship of creation, CST has a strong affinity with the concept of ‘just sustainability.’ The latter concept provides an over-arching theme for discussions which link secular priorities with the concerns of social morality.

In the housing policy domain, the interview focus was firstly on the right to shelter, as entrenched in the ‘human dignity’ principle of CST and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Appreciative conversations

scoped this terrain by considering the moral unacceptability of homelessness and perceptions of an imbalance between demand and supply of affordable housing. To identify in Appreciative Inquiry terms the 'positive core' in the current policy system (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987), questions about successful housing policy interventions were posed.

The theme of home ownership, a traditional vehicle for giving New Zealand families a stake in their communities, was then explored relative to the CST concept of the 'social mortgage' on private property as a platform for responsible civic engagement (SRS 1987:42). Subsidiarity in action was also examined, through the perspectives of those involved in third sector housing provision. Their responses raised ethical and policy queries as to the normative role of government in ensuring the populace is adequately housed, and who should fund housing subsidies to assist with affordability.

In the area of employment policy, full employment looms large in CST thinking, as does a focus on fair wages and decent working conditions. For this research, the systemic (political and economic) implications of moving to a full employment policy were discussed with the expert interviewees. Appreciative questions were posed as to 'what works' in current employment policy. The principle of subsidiarity also entered these conversations, as participants pondered the best place for decisions affecting local communities' ability to manage supply, demand, small business seed funding, training and opportunity creation in their own labour markets.

Economic and environmental links between the housing and employment policies were canvassed. The housing sector has been used by government as an economic lever, stimulating or suppressing growth and affecting employment availability. Economic growth generally, and the housing construction industry in particular, have environmental implications. The ethics of trade-offs between economic growth (jobs), social stability



(housing) and protection of ecosystems (environmental sustainability) were examined with the participants, in relation to the CST principles.

### *Themes within the Catholic and public policy systems*

As mentioned in Chapter 9, appreciative interviews look for positive energy and potential in existing institutions. In this instance, Catholic systems and public policy systems were examined. Some of the interviews canvassed the relationship between Catholicism and the New Zealand government. Others explored appreciatively the Catholic schooling system, as the seedbed for education for engaged citizenship and for future proponents of CST. The relationship between the ethics of public policy and the principles of CST constantly framed the design and focus of the interview questions.

The appreciative interviews explored key themes related to the public policy system. The theoretical work had evinced key issues for investigation with research participants. Interviewees were asked to consider the ethical implications of policy as influenced by political ideology and the power and influence of public officials. The normative dimension of public policy was discussed, given the concern of CST with the distribution of power in terms of 'right relationships' – who chooses, who gains, who loses and who pays. Trust in the integrity of government processes was a supplementary theme in this aspect of the debate.

Apart from choices involving trade-offs between different interest groups in society and between the economic social and environmental aspects of just sustainability, policies often have inadvertent effects. Such unforeseen and unintended consequences can disproportionately affect those who are powerless in the policy system. The implications of systemic power imbalance were canvassed with interviewees, to find ways to redress it

using the CST principles, especially that of subsidiarity, in the interests of just sustainability.

Appreciative interviews using the abovementioned 5D process (Cooperrider *et al* 2003) elucidated the potential for creating new normative assumptions and new paradigms, requiring different policy settings to bring them to fruition. The role of policy evaluation was explored with some participants, in terms of its potential for a more proactive approach to impact analysis. The principles of CST provide built-in ethical evaluation criteria. These can be used before, during and after policy development and implementation, to avoid unplanned and unjust policy consequences. The likely level of receptivity for CST in policy evaluation was investigated.

### **10.3 The range of interviewees**

A total of 38 expert interviews traversed perceptions of housing and employment policy impacts; the extent to which social and environmental justice are, or are not served in current policy; the practices and the values that drive policy development; and the potential for transformational change in public policy outcomes. Each interview was individually designed, to capitalise on the expertise of the participants, while allowing strategic conversations to evolve within the AI model. Participants were chosen for their stakeholder interests and organisational allegiances. Their responses were derived from personal or institutional perspectives, as they chose.

The categories for participant selection were determined as the theoretical design took shape. I needed experts who could elucidate and exemplify each theoretical domain that was to be canvassed. From my own knowledge of key people's roles and achievements, augmented by their suggestions for other contacts, I derived my selection of interviewees.

The research participants were drawn from several generic groups. Within Catholicism, the interviewees included:

- Catholic Church leaders
- Catholic academics and other lay experts
- Catholic NGO representatives involved in employment policy
- Catholic NGO representatives involved in housing policy; and
- Experts in the Catholic education system.

In the wider secular community, the participants included:

- Representatives from NGOs focused on employment
- Representatives from NGOs focused on housing; and
- Central government politicians who know about social policy, sustainability, employment or housing and centralised policy processes.

In the public policy arena, the expert interviewees included:

- Public policy managers and analysts in employment policy
- Public policy managers and analysts in housing policy
- Government agency service managers in employment assistance; and
- Government agency service managers in housing provision.

The brief for all these interviewees was to scope the contextual influences and key issues for the institutional area of interest or policy domain in which they specialise; identify what works well there at present; consider how new energies could be generated so that enhancements could be made; indicate the extent to which CST (or equivalent moral principles in other faiths, if they preferred) could assist in ethical policy development; indicate desired changes to existing systems; and indicate how, and by whom, such changes might be effected.

## 10.4 Application of Appreciative Inquiry

Through an Appreciative Inquiry process, each expert was invited firstly to articulate the social and environmental issues in his or her respective fields, then to ‘discover’ the key themes and potential for ethical development, ‘dream’ or envision what might be possible and ‘design’ what should happen to ensure justice (Cooperrider *et al* 2003, 2008). Then the CST principles were layered over the opportunities identified and insights already generated, to articulate a desired ‘destiny.’ Subsequent discussion focused on the extent to which the ancient moral tradition of CST could assist with ethical policy-making and how this might be achieved. For this project, the ‘delivery’ aspect of the Appreciative Inquiry model was captured in aspirational statements by the participants concerning what would improve policy outcomes in terms of just sustainability.

### *Indicative structure and content of appreciative interviews*

While appreciative interviews focus on the generative life-giving properties in organisations and systems, they also acknowledge that in some human institutions there are inevitably gaps, mistakes and omissions. The positive and grounded nature of AI emanates from its treatment of problems as opportunities for growth, rather than as constraints to be overcome (Cooperider and Srivastva 1987; Cooperrider *et al* 2003). While full sets of themed questions are supplied at Appendix Four, an indicative interview structure, aligned with the phases of the AI method, is outlined below:

### *Phase One – Discover what is*

- Sources of energy in Catholic Social Teaching
- Whether our society has any universal moral norms
- Sources of energy and drive in the public policy system

- Evidence of social (in)justice in New Zealand
- Evidence of environmental (in)justice in New Zealand
- Any impediments to achieving just sustainability
- Successes and opportunities in housing policy
- Successes and opportunities in employment policy
- Location and impacts of power in the policy system
- Current sharing of policy benefits and burdens among citizens
- Effects of current housing and employment policies
- Experiential evidence of adverse policy impacts and gaps
- Opportunities for change in policy or service delivery

### ***Phase Two – Dream what might be***

- Identification of the current ‘best of the best’ in the policy system
- Public policy outcomes that could be enhanced
- Potential for public policy to be driven from a moral perspective
- The elements of a moral perspective – what matters ethically
- Envisioning a more ethically tenable housing policy
- Envisioning a more ethically tenable employment policy
- How a justly sustainable society would treat people and the earth
- How a consensus on policy ethics might be strived for and achieved
- Changes that might be sought in policy decision-making processes
- Desirable sharing of benefits and burdens in the policy system
- Potential for CST to have more influence and how this would help
- Who and what in the policy system would benefit ethically from change
- Who might be disadvantaged by policy change
- How such change might be effected and by whom

### ***Phase Three – Design what should be***

- A normative approach to defining broad public policy outcomes
- How ethical principles should be applied to policy-making
- How CST should contribute moral signposts for new policy
- Application of the CST principles to evaluation of existing policy
- What needs to change in housing policy, why and how
- What needs to change in employment policy, why and how
- The best route for policy input from affected communities
- Responsibilities of government towards just sustainability

- Responsibilities of communities towards just sustainability
- Application of CST to employment policy
- Application of CST to housing policy
- Where public policy strategic decisions are best made and why
- Where public resourcing decisions are best made and why
- How the knowledge and energy of CST itself should be sustained

#### ***Phase Four – articulate the Destiny – what will be***

- The desired outcome as a ‘provocative proposition’ or aspirational statement
- Evaluate in advance the moral and societal benefits of a CST approach
- Identify the avenues for potential input from the CST perspective
- Decide on the influencing strategies for CST
- Connections with those responsible for housing policy
- Connections with those responsible for employment policy
- Articulate commitments to achieving just sustainability
- Implement the chosen CST-based influencing strategies

#### ***Phase Five – Delivery – what will make a positive difference***

- Aspirations for a justly sustainable NZ society
- How CST can help to shape a better shared future
- What we will see that is different if desired change can be effected
- What needs to be done, and by whom, to effect change

### **10.5 Qualitative data analysis**

The research design and implementation generated a large quantity of qualitative raw data, which had to be organised coherently for interpretative purposes, so that I could ‘theorise out of the data’ (Tolich and Davidson 1999:160). The analysis was done in two phases, to allow for the separate methodological and content knowledge streams that would later inform the development of new policy analysis frameworks. The data was organised firstly according to each of the five AI categories and participant groups,

and then by the main themes in the CST and public policy literature that had informed the fieldwork questions.

The structure of the interviews and arrangement of the questions, as outlined above, meant that the inherent order of the data facilitated presentation of the methodological findings, to which Chapters 11 and 12 are devoted. Data utilisation for these chapters involved the selection and aggregation of key quotes from the 38 interviews, with relative ease of paraphrasing and synopsis. In terms of ‘what is,’ ‘what might be,’ ‘what should be,’ ‘what will be’ and ‘what will make a difference,’ I wanted the participants’ voices to illustrate the importance of the concerns identified and the power of Appreciative Inquiry to generate positive change.

The second phase of data analysis, involving content analysis of the interview outputs, required a greater degree of coding and organisation. While cue questions had arisen from the literature review and supplied the broad themes, the detailed sub-themes under each chosen ethical and policy domain had to emerge from the participants’ replies. This material was to find its various homes in Chapters 13 to 16.

The quality, quantity and range of the insights contributed, combined with the expansiveness of the earlier literature exploration, called for iterative distillation, compression, summary and editing, to produce a synthesis that was at the same time comprehensive, representative, succinct and focused. While the task was challenging, I needed this synthesis, to inform the later development of new policy approaches based on CST and AI.

As recommended in Davidson and Tolich (1999:143), my data reduction involved summarising and coding the quotes from the participants, as emergent categories in separate data files. The coded clusters of material

became sub-themes and chapter sections, while the broader categories became themes and chapter headings. This process was undertaken throughout 2008, in detailed iterations of data reduction (coding), data organisation (theme definition) and data interpretation (ibid).

From the data files, I developed two sets of overview questions, to help with the interpretation of the data. These were used in Chapter 17. One set of questions dealt with present-day manifestations of the research proposition, while the other covered future needs and opportunities. This interpretative analysis led to Chapter 18, which linked principles, practice and potential in an examination of the interface between CST and public policy. At that point, I could return to the original research proposition, to validate it in terms of the insights and evidence accumulated and move on to the development in Chapter 19 of three new policy-making frameworks.

## **10.6 Research ethics and procedures**

The Massey University *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation Involving Human Participants* stipulates that research not cause unnecessary harm, breach confidentiality, deceive anyone or create conflicts of interest. Instead, the Code is based on respect, informed and voluntary consent, social and cultural sensitivity and regard for privacy. Compliance with its ethical standards ensures the interests of individuals, groups, communities, institutions and the University are safeguarded. In this research project, all these standards were met and neither children nor disadvantaged people were involved.

This study had clear goals. Its theoretical approach was later substantiated through expert interviews with Catholic leaders, policy advisers, decision-makers and community advocates. The discussions canvassed their work,



the current secular principles for policy development, the values and the drivers for the policy process. Conversations were as objective as possible, given that no perspective could ever be completely value-free (Sarantakos 1998:18; Davidson and Tolich 1999:29). They traversed nothing that would not naturally occur in the respondents' work. No confidential information was requested and no particular viewpoint was promoted.

On this basis, the research complied with the 'low-risk' criteria and was assessed accordingly. This category states that if there is any harm, it is 'no more than is normally encountered in daily life' (MUHEC 2006). From the perspectives of moral theology and just sustainability, however, its content focus on the ethics of injustice is significant. This is illustrated by the moral principles, social concerns and practical experiences described herein.

A letter requesting an interview, with an attached information sheet and consent form was provided for each participant. The information sheet outlined the project's purpose, philosophical basis, scope and method, together with an indication of how each person's input would be used. These documents are attached at Appendix Two.

A semi-structured one- to two-hour appreciative interview was planned in most instances. Some follow up sessions were also accommodated, where participants wanted to explore the topic in more depth and/ or I needed more information. The interview data was collected manually, accompanied by my commitment to prompt provision of the interview notes for verification and amendment if necessary, prior to any subsequent use of the material. This was achieved expeditiously. A further opportunity for the interviewees to validate quotes for attribution was provided once the fieldwork data had

been written up and specific quotes had been selected for possible inclusion in the thesis document.

Participants had the absolute right to decline to be involved. They retained the right throughout the process to withdraw from engagement. They could require that aspects of the discussion be treated in confidence and that specific information not be attributed to them (Shaw 1996:243-5; Wilkinson 2001:16-7). In the event, four interviewees allowed their input to be used but chose not to have any of it attributed, while six others chose to make supplementary comments ‘off the record.’ Two engaged fully in their interviews, but preferred not to feature in the participant list. Their choices in the matter of attribution were fully respected.

Confidentiality was also discussed with each participant. As indicated in the information sheet, permission for brief direct quotes was sought, while the right of the interviewee to choose what was specifically attributed to him or her was respected. This respect applied to direct quotes and to synopses of individual data. It was explained that a guarantee of anonymity might not be tenable, however, given the high-profile and specialist roles of some interviewees. The informed consent process worked well and made each person’s options clear (Shaw 1996:243; O’Brien 2001:30).

Privacy law stipulates that research data cannot be used for any purpose other than that for which is collected (O’Brien 2001:30-1). The possibility of primary data being included in papers written for publication following the completion of the thesis was covered in the consent form and discussed with the interviewees (Shaw 1996:255). All participants expressed a desire to be contacted again should other possibilities of attribution eventuate.

## **10.7 Reflections on methodological and design effectiveness**

As mentioned above, the design and methods used in this project generated a substantial body of qualitative primary data. The input from ten selected Catholic experts was augmented by that from seven representatives from non-government organisations and community consultant/ advocates. Insights from ten policy analysts and policy managers complemented those from five government agency service managers and six central government politicians. While each group was too small to support statistically valid generalisation, the selected participants were representative of their groups. Indicative coverage of a range of perspectives was my aim.

Additional knowledge came from some useful overlaps among the participants. Two NGO representatives had expertise in CST. Two service managers had exercised complementary roles in policy analysis periodically and one service manager had been a politician. The cross-pollinated input available from these sources proved invaluable while a composite picture was forming in response to the research question. The range and depth of multi-faceted insight that was contributed by all participants posed quite a challenge for data analysis and synthesis.

In my interviews, Appreciative Inquiry worked as a mechanism for focusing on systemic possibility, despite the tendency of most participants to think in their usual mode of problem identification. Policy analysts were very prone to the latter, since their discipline is based on a problem-solving model. The NGO members were helpfully inclined to generate possibilities through envisaging better futures for their clients and communities.

The NGO representatives and service managers responded to opportunities to move to 'imagination mode' from their usual problem-solving and risk management focus. Catholic experts and politicians were evenly divided between AI responsiveness and the need to 'fix' what they thought did not work well. In all the interviews, more material was contributed on needs and opportunities for change than was gathered on existing systemic strengths that could be built upon. Participants valued the opportunity for an exploration of strengths and possibilities.

AI worked well for dealing with controversial subject matter and evidencing the issues requiring change. There was widespread concern at unjust policy impacts, but not negativity. In every system cited, there was something that worked well. AI helped elucidate the systemic strengths that could be built on, the potential for CST to assist with systemic improvement and many positive suggestions for change and development. Participants contributed their views energetically, without getting defensive or risking compromise.

Many interviews exceeded the allotted time, by agreement, due to participants' engagement with the issues and recognition of opportunities to debate important matters which are usually glossed over because of time pressures and other priorities. The research experience suggested that AI would provide a dynamic frame for principled new policy development, implementation and evaluation. It 'fires people up' creatively.

### *Systemic concerns and unexplored sources of inquiry*

Every three years, government is called to account for its performance in terms of its ability to address valid claims from specific groups within society. In a policy environment where all views are considered contestable but where those with the power can, and do, enforce compliance with their

preferences, sensitivities develop as to what can reasonably and safely be debated and what can be changed. Despite the positive AI frame, some research aspects elicited nervousness, or occasional refusal to engage. Public servants were bound by their *Code of Conduct*. They were not expected to comment on anything they might find compromising. Other participants were less constrained, with their personal as well as institutional views. Both forms of input were valuable, for different reasons.

A few people wondered about the appropriateness of linking principles which had originated from religion with policy outcomes in a secular society. No one refused to participate on these grounds, but some sought assurance that the ideas themselves were what mattered for the research, rather than the religious background from which they had come. Indeed, as the project proceeded, three of the Catholic participants suggested that public policy application of the CST principles would necessitate removal of the ‘Catholic labels.’ This mattered in the context of openness to using CST in the formative stages of policy development.

Inhibition was noticeable in some government servants. Most engaged with the research process positively, with insight and optimism for the future. Four senior officials who were approached felt they could not participate. The difficulties of the latter group with the research proposition lay in the relationship between ethics and policy – what should and should not be canvassed by state servants. One was concerned about political sensitivities in the ‘murky sphere of morality and ethics.’ Another was firmly of the view that the government and public service did not need the kind of ‘normative probing’ that the research appeared to entail.

While the *Public Service Code of Conduct* (SSC 2007c) and the Massey University *Code of Ethical Conduct* (MUHEC 2006) provided adequate protection for all concerned, there were isolated instances of extreme risk

aversion that spoke volumes with regard to open and honest debate among professionals. A ‘fear factor’ seemed alive and well. Public policy needs robust scrutiny and analysis, because for many of our citizens, its outcomes are sub-optimal in terms of just sustainability. Politicians need to hear about realities, not just about what is comfortable for them.

### *Implications for this research of choosing AI as the methodology*

In the design of this research project, I sought a methodology that would tap into people’s creativity, innovation and desire for justice and sustainability. Rather than focusing on the mechanics of standard policy processes, I wanted my participants to explore broader, deeper concerns imaginatively, including the ethics of public policy outcomes. I needed a framework for interviewing that would generate new ways of analysing policy-making itself, with a focus on the future. My choice of AI as the methodology raised design and implementation issues that, consistent with social constructionist norms, continuously shaped the project as it unfolded.

Because of its focus on relationship building, AI is time-consuming and emotionally demanding. I wanted to work with politicians, senior officials and other experts and leaders, so I aimed for effective AI coverage in interviews that my participants would not view as a waste of time. AI projects for organisation development can take 3-5 days, so my challenge was to adapt the methodology to one-hour interviews, reflecting time pressure realities in the policy system. My interviews were an experiment in assessing what could be covered quickly and succinctly. We dealt with complex issues with which the participants were well acquainted. Aspirational ideas flowed, once they each warmed to the topic. Problems were discussed with a view to alleviation or remedy.

My research did not seek organisational change immediately, so it did not purport to produce the full range of outputs and impacts that a full AI process would. So in that sense my work was theoretical – it had to be because of its limited scope. I took note of insights such as that from Van der Haar and Hosking (2004:1025) that: ‘Relational processes [should be] thought of as ongoing rather than what happens between inputs and outcomes.’ Not being constrained in an academic project by the rigidities of the policy system itself, I encouraged my interviewees to think differently about possibilities and how they might be realised in the policy system later on. AI provided a helpful framework for doing this.

Appreciative Inquiry challenges researchers and participants to ‘move beyond the normalised discourse of problems to be solved’ (Grant and Humphries 2006). My participants discussed difficulties as opportunities for constructive change. Consequently I obtained more data on what needed improvement and why, than on the systemic strengths. As Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003:18) observe, AI practitioners: ‘do not dismiss accounts of conflicts, problems or stress. We simply do not use them as the basis of analysis or action.’ Barge and Oliver (2003:132) corroborate this view: ‘What needs to be appreciated and discussed within conversations are problems, injustices and sacrifices’... therefore it is important ... to attune to the multiple possibilities ... and try to discern which aspects are most useful to appreciate in the moment.’

In my AI field work, I received rich and varied perspectives, without negativity, about needed improvements in the policy system. These insights enabled me to develop frameworks for new approaches to policy work. The key to this was careful formulation of interview questions and selection from a wide range of them, as indicated in Appendix Four. I designed this research from the assumption that there were areas in the policy system which required improvement, to improve our progress towards just sustainability. I worked from the premise that ‘AI accepts

problems for what they are – areas that need to be explored, discussed and transformed’ (Banaga 1998:263).

I needed to ensure that, if the AI interview questions which sought ‘the best of what is’ and ‘what might be’ did not address my concerns and those expressed by my participants, I had some problem identification and needs analysis questions available as well. Many respondents wanted to discuss the ‘hard stuff’ as well as their aspirations. The issues requiring attention emerged from the ‘discovery’ and ‘dream’ questions. From the strategies people had used to overcome barriers, it was not hard to pinpoint where systems gaps had impeded their work and compromised the outcomes they and their clients sought.

In common with many AI facilitators (Hammond and Royal 1998; Preskill and Coghlan 2003), I noticed that many of my interviewees looked stressed when describing frustrations, hindrances, or what they considered unethical. They brightened up when asked to identify systemic strengths and peak experiences upon which they could build. After expressing how reality affected them, they became energised when talking about their aspirations for a more justly sustainable society.

In the process of writing up the interviews, I encountered an issue noted by Kien (2006:30): ‘It is difficult to analyse the large amount of qualitative data which is generated in the interviews.’ I quite agree; it was difficult, but I needed all that data. As Van der Haar and Hoskings (2004:1030) observe: ‘Social constructionist processes rely on detailed qualitative data to give a rich picture of reality.’ They note further, and I discovered in my process, that it is appropriate to capture data from an AI ‘in a way that keeps the diversity (rather than looking for consensus) and gives space for others to make their own judgments’ (ibid). Ambiguity and evolving realities reside



comfortably in AI because change is constant, there are multiple realities and nothing is ever as static as some might wish.

Each AI project reported on in the literature is distinct in its design and implementation, explicitly tailored to a clientele and its purpose (Hammond and Royal 1998; Cooperrider *et al* 2000). Since there is no right or wrong way to inquire appreciatively, those who use the methodology are free to apply it in ways that elicit new energy, knowledge and insight among their project participants. From this cue, I designed my project to use all the ‘D’ phases with a focus on encouraging new patterns of thinking. I used 1:1 interviews because of the sensitivity of some topics, on which I would not have secured such frankness had my respondents been part of a group.

Furthermore, the focused and personal nature of the appreciative interviews produced such extensive data that, for this exercise, there was no need to seek additional means of gathering insights. In major policy or programme development work, one could use paired interviews with feedback to whole groups, or set up focus groups. These methods would extend the range of interactions and collaboratively generate ideas. Diverse stakeholders could also be involved, depending on the purpose of the AI and how it was designed. This would allow for the expression of ‘multiple different but equal narratives’ (Van der Haar and Hosking (2004:1024).

The fieldwork was designed to identify opportunities to align the policy system towards just sustainability. As it proceeded, it also suggested that ethical principles such as those espoused by CST have potential for informing and guiding policy analysts and decision-makers in their key task of channelling public resources to where they are most needed and will best sustain the common good.

The following chapters (11-16) are devoted to the collation and analysis of the interview data. They outline the key themes, significant insights, differing views and areas of consensus among the research participants. I wanted firstly to demonstrate the methodological approach through the findings and then to elucidate their substantive content. I believed both forms of analysis would underpin the development and use of new policy-making frameworks that I thought I would design, based on the knowledge I was gaining. The initial focus on the output from each AI phase also provided opportunities for reflection on responses by participant grouping, an aspect to which I return in Chapter 17.

Accordingly, Chapters 11 and 12 present fieldwork findings for each participant category from the 5-phase AI methodology perspective. Chapters 13 to 16 then elucidate the content of the interviews, organised by theme and sub-theme, leading to Part Three, with its interpretations (Chapter 17), connections (Chapter 18), applications (Chapter 19) and conclusions (Chapter 20).

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **Discovering and dreaming through Appreciative Inquiry**

This chapter is the first of six which collate the field research findings. It canvasses the responses from members of each of the five participant groups for the first two elements ('discover' and 'dream') of the AI paradigm which structured the interviews. It focuses on possibilities, articulates aspirations for justice and explores potential for the CST principles to enhance the public policy system. While Chapter 11 focuses on 'discovery' (what is) and 'dreaming' (what might be), Chapter Twelve covers the later 'design,' 'destiny' and 'delivery' phases of the inquiry, again by participant group.

#### **11.1 Complex topics and Appreciative Inquiry**

Much of the ethical material canvassed was complex and contentious. As the previous chapter has indicated, the use of AI, with its affirmative stance and repudiation of deficit thinking, created a professional climate to examine the potential for the ethics of CST to guide policy processes. The research proposition itself was also contentious, but the AI process increased the likelihood that it could be coped with dispassionately, in a spirit of hope for the future while building upon the best of the present.

In using Appreciative Inquiry for the field work, I chose to access all five 'D' elements (as outlined in Chapter 9) to develop interview questions that would encourage the participants to visualise possible futures, rather than simply describing 'what is.' While my approach is consistent with the generative aspects of AI, it is unusual in that most AI projects use exploratory one-on-one interviews as part of the 'Discovery' element only. AI practitioners usually employ other modes of group engagement, in

organisation development projects, focusing on reciprocal processes and shared goals, to elucidate possibilities and secure group decisions on development strategies.

My rationale for accessing all five elements in these interviews was that my research participants have no continuing accountability to each other or to me. This project is not about group development. It is a normative analysis of the policy environment and its possible ethical enhancement through the use of the CST principles. Any group work or decision-making would come later, but lies beyond the scope of this project. Restriction of the research discussions to ‘discovering what is’ would have confined the conversations to the ‘now’ rather than allowing for the imagination of a new future. It would also have limited creative thinking about the potential for an ethical approach such as CST to influence policy-making processes and decisions.

## **11.2 Appreciative Inquiry ‘Discovery’ participant responses**

### *Catholic leaders and experts*

The Catholic experts responded expansively to the ‘discovery’ questions about their work and CST commitments, and the connections between their work and just sustainability in the public policy system. The questions were designed to elicit strengths that could be built upon, while not denying the realities of injustice in this country. The interviewees understood pressures of political expediency, voter capture and power retention among people who are well-intentioned but have to work within a policy system. Several respondents, including David Tutty (a Justice and Peace Worker) and Rev Terry Dibble (special social ministry), indicated that the impacts of their own advocacy for justice and sustainability, framed by CST, are determined

by their own capacity for promoting change, and by the varying levels of receptivity to CST among decision-makers and power-brokers.

Some Catholic respondents such as Lisa Beech (a Caritas policy advisor) indicated when their work made an impression, influencing politicians and government organisations to think about human impacts of their decisions. Others saw advocacy in the public policy area as an uphill battle, because of a tendency within officialdom to view faith-based viewpoints as irrelevant. Yet this did not stop Catholic workers from persevering with advocacy when significant causes warranted it.

The processes by which CST is developed and promulgated were canvassed with Archbishop Charles Balvo (the Apostolic Nuncio) and with local theologians. Relationships between the social encyclicals, pastoral middle axioms and local action in the pursuit of justice were considered from the Catholic ‘see-judge-act’ perspective. David Tutty compared the theoretical and communitarian approaches in CST with the activist model favoured in liberation theology. He seemed particularly energised by the latter.

Catholic participants advised that submissions to Parliamentary Select Committees usually receive courteous attention, but with no guarantee of endorsement. For Lisa Beech, government between 2000 and 2008 was receptive to input on the environment, but defensive about poverty, which it felt was already being addressed adequately through social policy. As Lisa observed, ‘There is a lot of concealed poverty seen in low-waged, low-skilled jobs, unaffordable housing, poor health and poor educational outcomes among low-income and beneficiary families.’

CST was described by some of its experts, such as the theologian Ruth Smithies, as counter-cultural to capitalist economies and political systems:

‘It is a challenge to New Zealand society, politicians and government. Its messages go against the grain. We do not want to know.’ Terry Dibble commented similarly that ‘wealthy Catholics find CST embarrassing and are alienated by it.’

CST principles which are regarded as alien to today’s communities are the ‘universal destination of created goods,’ with its implications for private property and individually-amassed wealth; and the ‘preferential option for the poor’ in individualised and meritocratic societies which demonstrate low acceptance of human interdependence. As David Tutty noted, most people resist choices that involve personal expense, and ‘politicians, likewise, are not prepared to stand for anything carrying political risk.’ The relationship between rights and responsibilities, and the respective roles of charity and justice in wealth distribution were identified as contentious political issues.

#### *Non-government organisations, advocates and consultants*

Advocates and consultants in community services engaged with the research inquiry and shared deep insights. Values of altruism, service, sustainability, equity and interdependence pervaded their thinking. Advocacy for social and environmental justice framed their responses on the relationship between government and people. Many of them had evolved in their focus from activism related to power imbalances and exploitation, to dedicated advocacy for systemic change. In doing so, they remained true to their core values of justice and empowerment.

There was little evidence in these interviewees’ responses that government policy is designed from a sound ethical perspective. Individuals were seen to do their best, however, within a public policy system which by its nature perpetuated injustice. Many comments, from participants with senior public

service experience such as Madhavan Raman, Pauline Kingi and Wendy Reid, were made along the lines that ministers expect officials to give advice consistent with government's ideology and that genuine, but contrary, suggestions in the spirit of frankness are harshly dealt with. Typical comments included the observation that 'fearless' policy advice is a thing of the past and that people who ask penetrating questions about the ethics of policy outcomes are 'knocked about and defeated.'

Wendy Reid, a consultant specialising in strategic projects, offered the view that: 'policy is driven off knee-jerk reactions to so-called crises' rather than from principled appraisals of claims, needs and equitable opportunities. As Jan Francis (Executive Officer for the Mayors Task Force for Jobs) commented, 'It is not obvious that anyone has ever asked ethical questions about policy impacts.' In a critical observation for this research Jan noted that 'if the ethics of policy consequences mattered, policies would be shaped differently from the current arrangements.'

Trust in government was a key issue for several of these participants. The prevalent view was that it was fairly low, due to generalisations drawn from sporadic instances of politicians' activity which were seen as self-serving, even 'nakedly pragmatic,' rather than serving justice or accountability to the community. Unbalanced media coverage undermined community respect for our leaders and government institutions. Policy gaps, perverse incentives and discrepancies disproportionately affecting some people were viewed as government indifference to community needs and aspirations.

Subsidiarity and local involvement in government processes were key issues for the NGO participants. Government was widely seen as inaccessible and not accountable to the community. Its consultation processes often lack credibility, according to most interviewees, because of operational speed or a sense of pre-determined outcomes. Several (in particular Tony Mayow, a

community development leader, Jan Francis and Wendy Reid) noted that government has a responsibility to listen actively to local people who know what their communities need.

Non-government workers, advocates and consultants were all asked whether housing, employment, economic and environmental policies help or hinder their work. The AI positive framework helped participants articulate this, but most responses were influenced by their organisations' dependency on government contracts. Those with independent funding, such as Brian Donnelly (CEO of the NZ Housing Foundation), were less constrained. They commented on directionless government agencies, which fragment policy and obstruct local effort rather than building upon it.

Avenues for challenging policies that do not work for all sections of society were canvassed with all the NGO and community consultant participants. Some had worked extensively in the policy system, but found external avenues more effective in contributing to the common good (Wendy Reid). Some thought that the gap between words and actions reflected the gap between rich and poor. Several felt that the further the needs of poor people diverge from the interests of middle and higher-income voters, the less likelihood there is of social justice in the political and policy-making systems (Alan Johnson, Tony Mayow).

For this diverse group of participants, the AI elicited frank, well-informed comment that would be beneficial to the public policy process if more effective conduits could be developed to make connections with its sources. While they responded to the AI principle of building on systemic strengths, many of the NGO representatives have experienced unhelpful public policies and unresponsive processes. Their comments indicate scope for systemic improvement, to benefit their clients and communities, and for government itself to access local wisdom.



*Central and local government policy analysts and managers*

The ‘discovery’ phase for policy developers produced extensive comment about current policies and this material is examined closely in Chapter 15. Strategic policy settings such as just sustainability, social investment, social cohesion and well-being were also canvassed with this group. Social justice was explored from the perspective that, despite extensive investment in targeted social programmes and evidence of sound outcomes, some groups remain unable to access equal opportunities relative to society as a whole.

The AI interview process was designed to elicit the strengths in the system so that these could be built upon, to create effective outcomes for all, in a justly sustainable way. Most participants were unfamiliar with the integrated concept of ‘just sustainability’ but were accustomed to working with its two principles separately. Some had encountered it in the form of ‘strong sustainability’ as advocated by SANZ (2009).

Policy analysts were asked whether they believed an ethical framework guides the policy-making process and what evidence there was for its active use or otherwise. The drivers for political decision-making and the ethics of their impacts on policy-making were also explored. Respondents alluded to ethical frameworks in all human endeavours, whether acknowledged or not, morally sound or not, and in all cases presenting challenges to coherent policy-making. In the words of Margaret Crozier (a senior strategy analyst): ‘Our generation is ethically challenged due to the environmental damage we have already inflicted on future generations.’

The policy analysts and managers were expansive when discussing current policy and its operation. Some were less comfortable when discussing policy gaps that might impede justice for everyone. Others offered their views on policy enhancement opportunities, but on a non-attribution basis. Their suggestions were similar to those from non-government advocates and consultants. They supported widely-held views that local people know what is needed and what works best. They understand that government resources are finite and that equitable distribution is a complex task.

In the interests of assessing the extent to which policy-makers address local goals, comment was sought on partnerships, devolution of responsibility and resources and use of public consultation avenues. Pauline Kingi (Regional Director for Te Puni Kokiri) observed that:

In delivering assistance to Maori and other ethnic communities, government needs to understand some key distinctions: ‘done to’ is controlling; ‘done for’ is patronising. Government initiatives have to be ‘done with’ to have any chance of making a positive contribution.

Several respondents felt that strategic policy capability in the public service had dissipated during a period of ‘new public management’ with reductions in government staffing. According to a senior local government official, risk aversion and process orientation in government agencies means that ‘people of the “now” are impeding future-oriented thinking.’ Several policy analysts shared this view and wanted to be involved in strategic engagement. They wanted their own managers to show moral leadership by setting strategic direction based on fairness for all.

While policy staffing numbers have risen since 2000, many interviewees had seen depletion of intellectual capital evident in fragmented policy

initiatives; constant experiments with small pilot studies; under-confidence in recommendations; and an absence of integrated approaches across state agencies. Discrete accountabilities and budgets, as well as an under-supply of experienced staff, were seen to limit local initiatives in working together.

### *Central government service delivery managers*

This group comprised senior regional and national operations staff in the social housing, social development, income support, community economic development, job-seeker assistance and careers advisory domains of central and local government. Several participants have inter-sectoral relationships for policy and service integration. All indicated constant exposure to the effects of policy gaps, mismatches and inconsistencies with regard to client impacts and their own work effectiveness.

The managers identified strengths in service delivery which could be enhanced, but under-resourcing and capability gaps in the government services supply chain were frequently mentioned. These views were meshed with recognition of the need to target resources such as social housing and job search assistance stringently, transparently and equitably. Respondents intimated that, on the servicing end of the social policy spectrum, the ethics of policies aimed at realising people's potential are constantly put to the test.

Queries about the reasons for continuing disparities and inequality in this country produced extensive commentary on the impacts of current policy and targeting related to equity, differentiation and gaps in service provision. Social justice was seen by most participants as equality of opportunity, with the 'level playing field' a recurrent metaphor. Comments were made along the lines that some parts of the country are affected by inequality, because of the nature of their population bases.

Policy and service coordination was a key issue for the managers. Establishment of a 'one-stop policy shop' to improve service coherence was sought by some servicing staff. Megan Courtney (a Waitakere City Council Partnership Advisor) suggested, as did some public servants, that:

Despite the good will of people to participate in a locally democratic way, there are some centralised systems and processes that preclude it or make it very difficult. There seems to be some differences ... about who is the client and what is the real outcome sought.

Links were made between decision-making processes, the use of power and the extent to which community consultation is acted upon. Some saw policy development as politicised, secretive, competitive and untrustworthy. A senior policy adviser working cross-sectorally captured this unease:

The collaborative words are out there but there are strong disincentives to it. People have no idea what happens to their input. It disappears into the system somewhere. The loudest voices appear to be heard.

Several respondents acknowledged that even legitimate use of power may be misinterpreted in our egalitarian society. This affects public perceptions of officials as well as politicians. The latter group is often described as acting primarily in its own interests. As Jan Francis had observed, through her work with mayors, politicians are constantly asked: 'What is in this for you?' Some politicians were asked to respond to this, and to contribute their views on the ethics of policy processes and outcomes.

### *Central government politicians*

Among the politicians interviewed, there was a close link between personal ideology and decisions to enter politics. They identified experiences which had informed their views about just sustainability, relating to housing, employment and the socio-economic circumstances of low-income families.

Sue Bradford (a Green Party list MP) had ‘helped people on a day-to-day basis and advocated for change to institutional structures, with a view to achieving social policy that would ensure full employment.’ As a trade union general secretary, Hon Mark Gosche (a former Housing Minister) had found that the insecurity of low-paid, casual employment ‘led to broader problems in life for low-income people who struggled to cope.’ As Labour Ministers, Hon Chris Carter and Hon Judith Tizard had both expressed their social justice commitments in major social portfolios.

Rt Hon John Key (Leader of the Opposition at the time of the interview, now Prime Minister) and Hon Judith Collins (formerly Opposition spokesperson for Social Development and now Minister of Police) both indicated an orientation towards personal effort as the means by which socio-economic disadvantage could be overcome. They acknowledged the implications for justice of hardship in low-decile communities and wanted to implement policies to reduce inter-generational welfare dependency. They took office in the National-led government in 2008.

The interviews with political figures demonstrated clear contrasts in framing just sustainability by politicians of the left and right. For John Key, poor people lack self-belief, but their solutions are in their own hands, with a bit

of help if need be, as a ‘safety net.’ For Sue Bradford, at the other end of the political spectrum, absence of hope among poor people has systemic origins outside the control of those experiencing it, in that ‘not all can access their right to a job and a living wage.’ All of the politicians acknowledged that some people are struggling. On the basis of their political positions, they differed in their assessment of causes and the optimal role of government in resolving difficulties.

All of the interviewed MPs had heard of CST and some use its principles as a moral reference point for considering the ethical implications of proposed policy. Mark Gosche and Sue Bradford both cited the work of Caritas in drawing the attention of all parliamentarians to the moral consequences of decisions. Mark described the CST principles as ‘hugely useful in helping government develop policy.’ Sue went further, commenting on her use of *Laborem Exercens* as a guiding text on working conditions, while working for unemployed people’s rights, and in advocacy for workers’ rights in sponsoring legislation on minimum wages and opposing Sunday trading.

Mark Gosche echoed a view offered by Linda McQuade and other Catholic experts, that the CST principles themselves have proven helpful as ‘moral signposts’ in the political domain, but that they are best applied without the ‘Catholic’ label. With the traditional separation of church and state, there seems to be discomfiture in the political sphere with ideas originating from religion. Politician respondents felt that the public role of the church is much less accepted in society, and in Parliament, than its private role.

### **11.3 Appreciative Inquiry ‘Dream’ participant responses**

The ‘dream’ questions focused on systemic potential. Thematically we explored: What is possible? What might be? What would you like to see?

What opportunities are there? What do you hope for? How might ethical principles in policy-making help to bring your dreams into reality? These AI questions generated energy, enabling participants to think deeply about what matters to them in their work and its contributions to a better world.

### *Catholic leaders and experts*

Responses from this group were memorable for their vision, optimism and tempered realism about the capacity of CST to influence the policy system. A key theme for this group was the largely unrealised potential for CST to be used as the bedrock for an ethical approach to policy development. The Church itself was seen to have some work to do here. Brother Patrick Lynch (Chief Executive of the Catholic Education Office) noted that ‘there is common ground that could be built upon, provided it is done thoughtfully and respectfully.’

Conversations with the Catholic experts produced policy aspirations related to distributive justice, commensurate with CST principles. Linda McQuade identified a need for government assistance for ‘lower-decile families, who are most affected by poor decision-making.’ She saw possibilities for an ‘integrated package of power devolution, resourcing and capability-building’ to facilitate local decision-making. She felt CST had unrealised potential for contribution to the development of such a package.

Ruth Smithies linked political action to voter preference, hoping that voters would ‘acknowledge the importance of social justice and ... live in ways that would promote it.’ In Ruth’s view, politicians would then respond to electoral pressure ‘to think about moral implications of social and economic policy decisions.’ Catholic experts emphasised the relational nature of CST. It would not be socially effective solely through ‘fine words’ (David Tutty).

In Lisa Beech's view, development and implementation of a policy code of ethics would produce different patterns of systemic thinking – away from political whim, expediency and pragmatism to a moral appraisal of the relationship between ends and means. As Archbishop Charles Balvo pointed out, policy ends never justify immoral means, despite societal views to the contrary. This is one of the many 'hard messages' of CST, one which its adherents firmly support, and one which, they believe, could change public policy processes for the better.

*Non-government organisations, advocates and consultants*

Dreams for just sustainability among NGO representatives, advocates and community consultants were grounded in their daily work. They focused on social policy areas that would benefit from ethics-based enhancement. Four members of this group were Catholic. Others came from diverse spiritual perspectives with commitments to social and environmental justice.

Alan Johnson was dubious about potential for government to demonstrate adherence to social justice ethics, because of its denial that poverty is real in this country. In his view, shared by Lisa Beech, 'relative poverty is ignored by society and government, in the same way that third world poverty is.' Alan saw no energy on the part of government towards taking policy-making, structural or resourcing steps to alleviate poverty.

Power sharing, fair resource distribution, local participation in decision-making and empowerment all resonated in the NGO participant responses. There is a gap in government's appreciation of the value and the potential energy residing in local communities. Frustration was expressed by Wendy



Reid, Tony Mayow, Alan Johnson and Brian Donnelly towards a pervasive official attitude that ‘we know best what is good for you.’

*Central and local government policy analysts and managers*

While the AI process generally worked for this group, most policy analysts, and especially the managers, were more inhibited in the ‘dream what might be’ phase than all the other groups. Most were accustomed to operating in ‘deficit’ and ‘problem-solving’ modes of thinking, rather than positing alternative futures. Yet some were relaxed about articulating dreams and generating possibilities and responded to the opportunity to do so.

Margaret Crozier focused on sustainability and interdependence. Her dream statement combined a rich moral tradition with futures thinking:

We need to encourage a return to the values of looking out for each other and building a cohesive society. We need to rediscover hope for the future and confidence in ourselves as a caring community. We all need a sense of hope.

Most policy-oriented participants noted the need for policy to be consistent with government preferences and for it to be developed from empirical evidence of ‘what works’ rather than from conjecture about untested possibilities. Constructive suggestions (elaborated on in Chapters 15 and 17) came from cross-sectoral perspectives illuminated by interagency work. A prescient perspective on policy ethics and processes, encapsulating whole-of-government strategic thinking about outcomes, was contributed by Rawiri Brell (a Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Education):

Key aspects for success include representative involvement of all who are affected and who have done serious thinking about the issues; genuine power-sharing; acceptance that sustainable buy-in requires a process that is longer than that usually available in policy development; clarity and understanding of the policy impacts on people's lives; safeguards against inadvertent adverse effects; the confidence that positive outcomes can be achieved; and the presentation of powerful and positive images of change.

Supported by agreed principles of social morality, this insightful comment could be a prescription for ethical policy-making. It contains many elements sought by Catholic experts and non-government advocates in articulating their dreams for a fairer society. Capacity for integrated thinking is present within the policy system. It needs endorsement and nurturing.

#### *Central government service delivery managers*

The 'dream' questions for government service delivery managers were designed, from my perspective (at the time) as one of them, to tap into the creative idealism that motivates front-end public servants in their work. New ideas were based on awareness of the diverse impacts of social policy on clients. These managers contribute new thinking to their organisations and their ministers as part of their professional way of life, when they can get a hearing. Their avenues for engagement vary in receptivity from one organisation to another.

Social justice featured strongly in the aspirational thinking of this group. Government has a crucial leadership role in promoting it through its policy processes. Ministers were asked to 'front up' on contentious issues and competing claims, rather than leaving them for officials to handle. The ethics and assumptions of policy-making also engaged these participants. Some saw the need for policy developers to value things differently. Others

made a link between the CST principles or similar ethical stances, and the way policy might best be delivered in this country. As Rose Leonard (a local body economic development adviser) put it: ‘We need to learn about our individual and collective responsibility to the rest of creation, to our place, to our local environment, and then to decide to behave differently as a result of what we learn.’

The ‘dream’ responses from the service managers indicated that operational staff members in government agencies know what is needed for policy and programme effectiveness. They have deep awareness, based on local evidence, of what will fairly ensure all sections of the community have opportunities for self-development and civic contribution. They see much scope for policy improvement, from both the practical and the ethical perspectives. Their aspirational focus is consistent with their reasons for engaging in social service delivery, as Madhavan Raman indicated:

If we worked together on a ‘national charter’ and all believed in it, and acted upon it, we might get to a better state. We need to think deeply about the ethics of what we do. We fulfil what is required of us, but are we really doing good?

Indeed. That question is at the core of this research.

### *Central government politicians*

From their responses, it was evident that the politicians took on demanding public roles with the desire to ‘do good.’ To introduce the AI ‘Dream’ sections of their interviews, they were invited to outline the types of clients and presenting issues with whom they interact in their local communities. Many constituents’ queries relate to perceived policy or service inadequacy,

based on employment or housing impacts. Informed by these queries, the MPs are in a position to ‘dream’ and postulate, and then to ‘design’ or recommend how such concerns might be alleviated. The politicians were asked what currently works well in the policy system, what could be built upon and what requires improvement. They were each asked to nominate a few areas where evidence of social and environmental injustice suggested the government should pay more attention. Opposition MPs were asked what they would do differently if they were in government.

Ideological differences of opinion were evident as each politician expressed his or her ‘dream’ for just sustainability within a free market. Left-wing respondents supported government intervention through regulation and tax policy ‘to alleviate hardship, safeguard justice and encourage collaborative behaviour.’ Right-wing members, on the other hand, sought ‘a moderate market economy where people can aspire and succeed on their own terms.’ Potential for success in the latter view was based on the assumption that nothing systemic prevents any of us from responsibly exercising choice.

There was little cross-party agreement on the normative level of government intervention when people fall on hard times due to circumstances outside their control. Some political views were driven by economics rather than justice, while other positions were people-focused and/ or environmentally oriented, but required increases to government spending. The politicians’ ‘dreams’ were all clearly framed within their party political viewpoints.

#### **11.4 Key insights among the ‘discover’ and ‘dream’ responses**

In the ‘discovery’ phase, the findings were fairly consistent across the five groups of participants. People demonstrated awareness of systemic injustice and its causes, as well as receptivity to input aimed at its alleviation. There

was a sense that the policy process impedes well-meaning people from ‘doing good.’ The physical remoteness of most central government decisions had been interpreted as systemic indifference to socio-economic difficulties in communities. There was a desire for government processes to be more transparent and for key staff to be fully competent and more accessible to their clients and communities.

Opportunities to access local expertise, commitment and energy appeared not to be well mobilised, so input by local people into policies affecting them was sought. Government services offered locally were identified as having institutional strengths that could be built upon, provided there was better targeting and coordination of resources, combined with training to ensure front-line staff members were sensitive to clients’ unique needs.

The ‘dream’ phase elicited a variety of responses, with different foci among the five respondent groups. The Catholic experts wanted to see CST applied to policy issues, with decisions based on a morally sound understanding of ends and means. NGOs and community consultants wanted government to recognise the systemic causes of injustice and address them structurally.

Policy analysts and managers wanted ethical criteria to form part of the assessment of ‘what works’ when policies are designed, implemented and evaluated. They wanted more time to think through the ethical implications of policy proposals and suggested that less pressure to produce advice and recommendations would produce results that were more sustainable.

Government services managers sought coherence among government goals, policy recommendations, decisions and implementation strategies, to assist them in their work with clients. They wanted to believe that the systems

behind their face-to-face work would enable them to 'do good' with their clients, who could then grow in confidence and achievement.

The politicians wanted to be able to rely on the policy system to produce sound advice and recommendations that would enable them to act according to the principles, party manifestos and aspirations that had led them to Parliament in the first place.

The above perceptions concern justice and respect for each person's dignity, contribution, development potential and interdependence within communities, no matter which role people play in the policy system. There is strong correlation between such perceptions and the intent and principles of CST. The 'discover' and 'dream' phases of this AI produced incisive and challenging information about the strengths and realities of CST, the public policy system and the links between the two. Extensive comment was also gathered about the goals of all participants, seeking just sustainability as they go about their work and lives.

Chapter 11 has canvassed settings in which policy is developed, advocacy occurs and services are delivered, along with their enhancement potential. The purpose of Chapter 12 is to reveal respondents' ideas as to the optimum design of the policy system and to indicate how just sustainability may be served, if iterative attention in policy-making to an ethical framework such as CST were gradually to produce systemic change.

## **Chapter Twelve**

### **Designing a destiny and delivering it through Appreciative Inquiry**

This chapter captures the ‘grounding’ phases of the Appreciative Inquiry. Responses indicate what participants believe should happen (design), what will happen (destiny) and what will make a positive difference (delivery) if systemic change is driven by ethical principles which frame policy-making. Insights flow from respondents’ appraisals of current realities (discovery) and future potential (dreaming) as outlined in Chapter 11. The thoughts captured in Chapter 12 build upon the expressed hopes and dreams of the participants for policies that entrench social and environmental justice.

Accountability for public resources places demands on senior officials that incline them to evidence-based practice. For AI projects to be acceptable to management, they must be grounded in practical application. Government is criticised by my research participants and others for producing strategy documents without implementation plans or dedicated resources. This suggests that if AI were used to encourage the use of CST-based ethics in policy development, it would need to be buttressed by practical strategies and outcomes. Once the ‘discovery’ phase is complete, the ‘destiny’ and ‘delivery’ aspects of AI underpin the imaginative ‘dream’ work, while the ‘design’ forms the bridge between aspiration and reality.

#### **12.1 Appreciative Inquiry ‘Design’ participant responses**

The ‘design’ section in the AI process asked respondents for their normative views of public policy processes and outcomes. Their insights covered the need for an ethical approach to policy-making and the potential for CST to inform it; the optimum balance between rights and responsibilities in policy targeting; the roles of government, community organisations and citizens in

policy setting and implementation; ideals and norms for social policies such as housing and employment; and suggestions for changes to systemic assumptions and processes that might achieve justly sustainable outcomes.

### *Catholic leaders and experts*

Most Catholic expert interviewees had engaged in advocacy related to social services or education, so were well-placed to identify local needs and gaps which create injustice. Dr Mary Betz (Caritas) suggested, for example, that ‘the CST principles should generate the right questions about moral and ethical consequences.’ She did note, however, that CST represents one point of view among many, a point also picked up by Lisa Beech and Rev Neil Darragh. Neil captured many participants’ views with his observation that:

The CST principles can be presented as applied common sense, reflecting normal standards of acceptable social behaviour, but the manner in which they are applied may be more contentious. Reasoned analysis will be needed to convince those who may not wish to adjust their thinking.

While social justice concerns dominated the views of Catholic participants, some referred to the environmental aspects of just sustainability. Mary Betz, Neil Darragh and Sister Mary Foy talked about ‘new spirituality,’ a dawning realisation of the intrinsic value of nature and human responsibility to care for it. CST has come up to speed with this discourse and has an ethical perspective to contribute to it (*CIV* 2009:48-50).

Due to his long association with government officials and politicians, Br Pat Lynch offered a pragmatic view on public policy processes and the tools used to implement government goals, suggesting that: ‘Policy development



would be more effective if policy analysts actually got out and talked to people and found out what is needed, rather than assuming from a distance that they know what to do.'

Neil Darragh and Pat Lynch both wanted to see a change in policy-makers' hierarchical insulation from the impacts of their decisions. Linda McQuade noted 'a lack of understanding of realities and needs on the part of policy-makers.' In relation to the CST principle of subsidiarity, Lisa Beech and others had queried whether the nation's governance suited all circumstances. None advocated full devolution of responsibility or funds, but all wanted realism, responsiveness and common sense in decision-making.

With regard to normative positions on housing policy, the Catholic experts focused wholly on the right to decent shelter as a core component of human rights and dignity. As Linda McQuade observed, 'Families should have adequate and affordable housing. It is not acceptable that anyone live in cars, buses or garages. That is not consistent with human dignity.' Catholic views on employment policy, also focused on human dignity, were thematically similar to those on housing. Just wages were a prime concern. The basic minimum wage was considered insufficient to support a family, especially one with several children. The right to have a job was regarded as fundamental and government was expected to ensure that all who needed employment had access to decent jobs. For the Catholic respondents, these norms should all be intrinsic to employment policy design.

#### *Non-government organisations, advocates and consultants*

NGOs and other community workers represented a significant source of comment on social policy and processes, informed by years of dealing with local consequences of policy, resourcing and servicing by remote control.

While the interviews were positive, strong views emerged about an absence of official and political attention to several major dimensions of governance. These included the ethics of policy decisions; the lack of systemic pre-work to identify adverse policy impacts; the locus of decision-making; the role of government in listening to local input; and a need to ensure justice.

This group was assertive about ethics such as community well-being, equity and responsiveness to diversity. Government's duty of care to communities appears to be in short supply. In the view of Wendy Reid:

Government lacks incentive, mechanisms, knowledge to lead sustainable development. With all the emphasis on 'due diligence' and 'risk management' related to government itself, I am no longer sure who takes responsibility for the 'duty of care' to communities.

A 'bottom-up' approach to policy-making would increase the likelihood of just sustainability (Wendy Reid, Megan Courtney). This would require government to relinquish some power, but NGO representatives are not confident it would be receptive to doing so. Tony Mayow (Community Waitakere) voiced concern that 'Government has not understood, or is unwilling to recognise, the implications of partnership on equal terms.' He identified this issue as: 'a question we all need to consider, to get more ethical governance frameworks. It matters in terms of outcomes and best results who makes the decisions, where and in consultation with whom.'

Alan Johnson offered a prescription for policy design based on adherence to an 'ethic of care' towards those who are in penurious circumstances: 'Current policies create dependency and poverty traps, rather than self-determination and autonomy' and government intervention was needed to reverse this trend. He envisaged 'government having to move back to

subsidising housing to a much greater extent than it does currently, through increased direct social housing supply and a wider catchment for housing loan eligibility.’ He believed these imperatives should drive housing policy design, in the interest of social justice.

In the employment domain, the principle of subsidiarity suggests that central and local government roles in creating jobs, facilitating training and helping people find work should be differentiated. For Jan Francis:

The key role of central govt is funding. It also has an enabling role, or it should have, to help other sectors do their jobs. Local government provides work, research and localised policy. The third sector contains the programme providers. Businesses provide jobs and drive the economy.

Employment policy, labour market policy and an income safety net are key adjuncts to economic policy, in the views of NGO respondents. Services are not always designed to address need, and coordination is often absent. Sister Mary Foy noted ‘a servicing gap for 16-17 year olds who are not required to remain in school but who cannot access social welfare job-seeker assistance either.’ She finds government funding ‘so tightly specified that community providers and receptive officials cannot find creative, innovative adaptations to the standard programmes.’

### *Central and local government policy analysts and managers*

In their ‘design’ discussions, these respondents focused on government’s policy needs and requirements. They knew about the whole range of policy intervention tools, how they are used in the problem-solving paradigm and what is likely or possible within a rational positivist world view and policy

setting. Some had experienced or were receptive to working in constructionist settings.

Significantly for this research, the policy analysts were less confident than other interviewees that the policy system could cater justly for all circumstances affecting groups in society. In their work, they live with the difficulties of balancing relative need. They believe that policy-makers do try to achieve fair solutions. Their sense of ‘what should be’ was influenced by ‘what is’ in terms of the requirements of them as public servants. All contributed freely to the research conversations, but some preferred not to be quoted as to their own, or their agency’s normative positions on justice.

The discussions about ethics involved an explanation on my part of the CST principles, followed by discussions about their relevance, applicability and likelihood of acceptance in the policy community. Several observed that all policy has an ethical underpinning of some sort. With regard to CST itself, a common view was the impracticality of assuming shared understanding of the principles. As the literature evinces, they are interpreted diversely, which can create confusion and lack of focus. As one senior policy manager pointed out: ‘There are debates to be had about each of them, and a wide spectrum of views to be taken into account when developing policy.’

Political risk aversion, reflected by public servants, combined with pressure for rapid policy responses to political issues, creates an environment where, according to a central government policy manager: ‘The policy work is politicised, ugly media beat-ups hinder rational conversations and there is little scope for deep thinking.’ This creates risks to democracy, in the view of Rose Leonard, who noted that ‘issues about who gains, how they gain, who pays and who misses out are significant in policy decision-making.’ A policy analyst thought that: ‘There should probably be more discussions of this type, but there is never enough time before a policy is rolled out.’

Discussions with the policy managers about government receptiveness to community advocacy produced strong comments about the genuineness of official consultation processes. Differences in perception between local and centrally-based policy people were alluded to. As Pauline Kingi (Te Puni Kokiri) remarked: 'I have always wanted the policy loop to be driven by the community, not by graduate policy analysts, but my Wellington colleagues are persuaded by the "pure" policy cycle.' Margaret Crozier observed that: 'Central government policy analysts ... have no sense of ownership of the issues because they are not personally affected by them.'

Apparent lack of receptivity at the centre to local concerns and impacts led to debate about the best places for government decision-making. There was consistency among the viewpoints expressed. Major programme decisions with large funding implications and broad policy design exemplify functions best held centrally, for consistency and national budget management. These responsibilities should be discharged in full awareness of local implications. The local view among officials was that central parts of the organisation pay less attention to local input than they should, and hold onto lower-level functions that could be dealt with more appropriately by local offices.

#### *Central government service delivery managers*

These respondents, based in the regional or local offices of their respective government agencies, shared many views with the NGOs, due to their similar proximity to policy impacts in communities. All were forthright about what should be changed in housing and employment policy, to further the cause of justice. Most were happy to be quoted, the exceptions being a small number whose organisational policy precluded attribution in external documents. Nevertheless, that did not stop them from contributing fully.

Some managers noted an absence of ethical debate to frame their work, and wanted to entrench such discussion in their systemic way of life. Madhavan Raman encapsulated the view of several of his inter-sectoral counterparts, asserting that:

We do not have enough debate about public policy and the ethics that underpin it, and we do not seek widely for the best solutions. The people within the system who ask penetrating questions get knocked about, discouraged and defeated.

Some policy tools appear to be used less effectively than is necessary for accountability to communities. Respondents indicated a lack of awareness of evaluation work undertaken, and queried the quality of prior thinking when policy is introduced. One local manager suggested that: ‘Adverse social impact assessment has the capacity to blow holes in the good news political stories, so evaluation is seen as risky, political and driven by agendas.’ Most participants wanted to see the policy process changed to allow time for strategic and ethical thought, prior to policy implementation.

The service managers’ group of respondents, often affected by decisions made remotely, would like more government decisions to be made locally. Yet the accountability issues were recognised. Some risk was seen in full devolution of responsibilities and resources, but there was ‘probably an appropriate half-way position.’ Effective governance was a key to achieving effective subsidiarity. This would require leaders in government and its agencies to think strategically, collaborate across portfolios, facilitate local cross-cutting work and be aware of the local impacts of their decisions.

### *Central government politicians*

In considering the AI ‘design’ component, the politicians quoted their party positions on social and economic policy. Each had joined a party because of congruence between its manifesto and their own views about government roles, private property, personal income, decision-making processes and proper relationships between rights and responsibilities. All were cognisant of social, economic and environmental trade-offs between policy options. They each outlined design choices which they believed would create most benefit and least harm to individuals, families, society and the environment.

Cabinet Ministers need policy advice and analysis that is researched, accurate, comprehensive and succinct in its assessment of options. It is often required at very short notice, which creates a tension between quality and speed. As Hon Chris Carter observed:

I work quickly and like everything to be done yesterday. As Minister, I tend to push for rapid results. But sometimes I have to accept that the processes of government and the bureaucracy require methodical and time-consuming approaches and a lot of analysis.

In commenting on the ways in which social justice might be safeguarded in a free market, Sue Bradford identified checks and balances for the policy system available in the wider community. These could provide quality assurance for policy processes, offsetting the need for speed, if there were official systems to deal with external input responsively. Local associations, groups and organisations such as trade unions, centres for issues-based advocacy, non-government organisations and special-interest community groups (intermediate associations in CST) all have potential for such input if government would listen to them.

Queries of the politicians on the locus of decision-making produced interesting perspectives. Since the policy decision-making role of politicians is nationally oriented, its usual setting is the central bureaucracy – either as the official source of information and policy advice, or as the source of ideas which may be refined and must be challenged. Their views have, however, been influenced by interactions in local electorates and list members’ offices. Mark Gosche, for example, commented that:

Decisions are not always made in the most effective places. Policies and programmes are often put in place without real consultation. Many official processes amount to little more than ticking boxes to say we have consulted.

Sue Bradford was also critical of the quality of public consultation. She cited consultation with local groups as essential to sound policy-making. While all the politicians agreed on the need for genuine consultation, there was little input from them on power-sharing or devolution of responsibility and financial resources. Centralisation of key processes and systems was the norm for this group of respondents. The dominant issue for them was how to reflect local needs and aspirations in policy processes and decisions that have to work for the whole country.

## **12.2 Appreciative Inquiry ‘Destiny’ participant responses**

The ‘destiny’ section of an AI is concerned with ‘what will be.’ In organisational projects, it gathers up commitments to change, by securing group consensus on the means of transformation. For this research exercise, however, the ‘destiny’ element was used experimentally. It enabled respondents to identify ethics and outcomes that would characterise public policy if key decision-makers and officials could be persuaded to think more



deeply about the impacts of their actions, especially on vulnerable groups in society. In this section, the participants' responses follow from their 'design' insights into 'what should be' in the policy system – from 'what should be' to 'what will be.'

#### *Catholic leaders and experts*

For these respondents, 'what will be' is their commitment to the principles of CST and conviction that CST has a role in the public arena. In the past, it may have been the 'Church's best kept secret' (de Berri, Hug *et al* 1983) but no more. It may be one of many voices in the public domain, but it is the one to which these experts subscribe, and the one used in this research for exploring ethics and policy connections. As Br Pat Lynch observes, and Lisa Beech endorses: 'Applied CST has the potential to lift social well-being, to add value to the political processes and to educate New Zealand society about social justice and how the community can benefit from it.' Catholic organisations live the CST principles actively, promoting them as an ethical model for others to emulate. They are driven by their belief in human dignity and by the 'preferential option for the poor.'

#### *Non-government organisations, advocates and consultants*

Among the NGO representatives, advocates and local consultants, a sense of the links between systemic improvement and ethical attitudes was evident. Their responses adopted the pattern 'if government listens to community aspirations and acts upon them, then improvements to public policy and service delivery will follow.' These respondents were clear as to the changes that could be expected. Sister Mary Foy suggested, for example, that, if CST principles were embedded in policy thinking:

Decent housing would be available for everyone. All people in society would be able to participate in community activities. Everyone [would] receive adequate income. Youth at risk would be brought into useful council/community ventures.

On the potential for eliminating homelessness, as a social policy objective, Elaine Lolesio (Monte Cecilia Trust) suggested that ‘with hope, anything is possible.’ If government acts ethically in its analysis and decision-making processes, there is potential for significant principled gains, in the view of Jan Francis. Such gains include:

Greater evidence of long-term thinking, more willingness to implement policy that works for local people and more local support for policies that proved effective. Government would lose the ‘we know best’ approach and would know how to use local expertise tactically. There would be no pretending to consult if government had already decided on its course of action.

Jan Francis also captured a range of practical measures that government and its agencies could implement, to ensure that policies were developed and implemented ethically, in the knowledge of local need and potential for contribution. As Jan put it:

What would I change? I would ensure there were good feedback loops between central and local government prior to policy being implemented and more use of independent research to inform policy development. I would want greater links between policy and practice, with policy informed by practice and modified for practical improvements. I would want the silos between the sectors removed, to facilitate more collaborative work and information flows.

Concurrence with this view came from many other workers and advocates associated with NGOs. They all emphasised the probability of positive change if government accepted the above challenges.

*Central and local government policy analysts and managers*

The AI 'destiny' phase elicited policy analysts' views on the relationship between government and communities, in the interests of greater local input to decision-making. While centralised control, complicated bureaucracy and risk aversion impeded communication between government and citizens, locally-based analysts believed that government agencies could increase their responsiveness to communities. Centrally located respondents thought there was already enough local input to policy-making, but there was always scope for its refinement.

Comments from the policy analyst group included the observation that policy-making involved hard decisions, balancing multiple objectives and setting priorities to reflect the goals of government. This focus was expected to continue, and appropriately so, in the policy analysts' view. Several senior managers advised that they wanted the state not to be seen as a silver bullet to fix everything. Each one saw a role for other organisations to share the funding and servicing burdens.

Margaret Crozier emphasised the need for equality and role clarity, without 'Detaching the government from communities and letting them fend for themselves.' Others stressed the need for coherent government leadership to sustain an interface between employment, job creation and community economic development. They commented that their organisations had the capacity to do so, as long as operational initiatives complied with the wishes of government.

### *Central government service delivery managers*

Service managers in government agencies knew of their organisations' degree of openness to equity in policy design and targeting. Their sense of policy ethics was honed by local exposure to injustices in communities. From a local body perspective, relevant to central government as well, Rose Leonard commented:

To attain a stronger ethical position in policy-making, our policy developers and decision-makers need clarity about what they propose to achieve, how and why. They need to be clear about what they value and why. They need new ways to value social and environmental impacts and to assess the costs to those for whom policy does not work.

With regard to people for whom policy does not work, several interviewees supported affirmative action to promote social justice. They were confident that effective policy targeting would see more Maori and Pacific people in positions of influence, reflecting cultural diversity. They felt that policies would then be implemented to ensure equity and justice for everyone.

### *Central government politicians*

For government MPs, the 'destiny' aspects of the interviews canvassed their commitments to policy initiatives already begun. The contributions from opposition members centred on what they would do if they attained power or access to it through a coalition partnership. At the time, we had a Labour-led coalition in power and the National Party led the Opposition. These roles were reversed late in 2008.

From a social democratic perspective, Chris Carter emphasised the interventionist role of government in addressing market-driven inequality, commenting that: ‘It is very important for policy-making to be underpinned by a strong sense of social justice. As government, we have to intervene actively to facilitate socially just outcomes.’

John Key and Judith Collins mentioned the desirability of social mobility, people taking responsibility for their own decisions, and the need for freedom to take opportunities for economic gain. Judith Collins felt that ‘disadvantage could be overcome with personal effort,’ while John Key thought that in this country, people ‘can realise their own dreams’ as long as they are ‘enabled to make their own choices.’

Politicians emphasised that choice can be exercised effectively, and social justice can be maintained, provided everyone has the tools to make sound decisions and access opportunities. Closer examination of the illustrations which our politicians use to explain their views, however, suggests nuanced variances among their positions. These nuances concern the extent to which taxpayer funds should be used to alleviate disadvantage when there is disagreement as to the relative influence of personal and structural causes.

### **12.3 Appreciative Inquiry ‘Delivery’ participant responses**

For this research, ‘delivery’ covers the social, economic, environmental and cultural characteristics that would be evident if ethics and social morality were to play an explicit role in policy-making. Participants were asked to express their hopes for New Zealand society in terms of just sustainability, through their visions of what can, should, and will be. The key questions to

round off the interview process were ‘What are your aspirations for our future?’ ‘What will make a justly sustainable difference to our way of life and how will we know when we have achieved it?’ ‘How will ethically sound policy decisions support our goals?’

### *Catholic leaders and experts*

Catholic participants focused on the family as the foundation of society. Attitudes to, and support for, families would be enhanced through a range of choices available in an economy based on principles of justice. ‘If we were prepared to get by with less,’ in Mary Betz’s view, ‘we could reduce our working weeks, which would mean less overtime and more time to spend with our families.’ Companies could then redistribute hours required for production, thus creating job opportunities. In Mary’s view, ‘this would be an example of redistributive social and economic justice in action.’ David Tutty, Ruth Smithies and Lisa Beech expressed similar sentiments, all aligned with the family-oriented CST principle of the dignity of work.

Several Catholic respondents mentioned the media as a force for change in the community and in public policy. Coverage of climate change impacts, for example, is having an impact on perceptions. Neil Darragh hoped that ‘from media pressure might come more sound environmental policies and more just social policy.’ As Lyndsay Freer and others pointed out, the media has a moral responsibility to use its influence ethically.

With a focus on the preferential option for the poor, David Tutty’s comment identifies the ethics that would prevail in a better society: ‘My vision would be that we live more simply and sustainably, understanding the effects of energy use and climate change on the planet’s ecology and that we see ourselves connected to the poorest people on the planet.’ The Catholic

respondents are hopeful that this ideal will be achieved, because hope itself frames their world view.

*Non-government organisations, advocates and consultants*

In describing the outcomes of a schools-based sustainability project, one of the consultants reflected on realities for disempowered people. She had heard a young girl say that all she wanted was a full night's sleep, because she had not had one for years. That kind of deprivation should not be a reality in this country and in a justly sustainable society, it would not be.

Some NGO respondents focused on the practical improvements that public policy focused on justice would bring. While demand would always outstrip resources, a social justice orientation would guarantee funding redistribution to help the poorest in society. In an altruistic setting, people would be more likely to engage in community activities and democratic processes.

If our policy settings produced justice for everyone, Tony Mayow expected that 'all would have equal opportunities in education, employment and housing. We would not be divided by birth or location.' Tony saw 'ethical governance as pivotal to necessary change.' Alan Johnson envisioned a society supported by 'social policies that genuinely look after vulnerable people, rather than leaving them in deficit relative to the community at large.' He was concerned that we not descend into the 'politics of envy'; observing that people do not resent success as long as the means to achieve it are available to all. 'People should be encouraged to make a fair go of their own lives, but with some help to get started if need be.'

Wendy Reid hoped for ‘a winning combination of cultural diversity which we celebrate and a natural environment that we respect and care for.’ She and Alan Johnson shared a vision of ‘community well-being through collaborative approaches and looking after each other.’ Sister Mary Foy captured her Catholic NGO’s aspiration for ‘a community in relationship with the whole of creation ... to understand the place of humanity in the cosmos. We are not alone, nor should we act as though we prefer to be.’

*Central and local government policy analysts and managers*

In considering what would make a difference to deliver a justly sustainable future, most respondents working in the policy system considered that the tools and policy settings already exist in this country for justice to be fully achieved. They identified potential, however, for more effective application of the tools, through careful targeting of resources.

Some policy analysts saw that systemic change with an ethical orientation could make a real difference to disadvantaged people. A senior manager wanted ‘strengthening of the structures that support the achievement of morally sustainable outcomes in our society.’ Another stressed the need to secure civic agreement on ‘what constitutes an ethically good life and how we should care for each other and the environment.’ Such a process would help to make a positive difference to policy outcomes.

Margaret Crozier saw a need for new assumptions about what was ‘enough’ in terms of material resources for each of us. Without agreement on this, we would remain mired in consumerism, competitive practices and arguments about conflicting claims. We have the capacity, in Rose Leonard’s view, to move towards such agreement, which would ‘build on the strengths of New Zealand society and celebrate what works for long-term sustainability.’



### *Central government service delivery managers*

The service delivery respondents expressed hopes similar to those of the NGO representatives, but with an overlay of detailed policy and operational knowledge. 'Delivery' is the focus of their work. Several considered the potential for the policy system to operate more ethically through applying CST principles or similar frameworks for social morality. One believed that:

There is some appreciation of ethics and openness to their expression in the system already. Influence might be exerted in the training of policy analysts within the government agencies. The ideal would be to have ethics 'just there' as part of the policy-making way of life, rather than requiring issues-based attention.

To achieve this, we would express ethical principles as broad government goals, with which all the agencies could identify and then align their core businesses. In an ethical society, according to Megan Courtney, 'we would find central and local government working together for community outcomes.' Change would come from 'strong relationships based on trust, honesty and good will.' Those in power would make decisions based on people's needs, not to serve their own interests. Our community would be less polarised and the gaps between rich and poor would be reduced. As Megan put it, 'Government would lead through decisions which supported sustainability and social justice.'

According to the practical perspectives of Mary Kayes and others, better-funded, focused assistance for job-seekers would make a major difference to social outcomes. Employers would accept the CST ethic that 'people should be placed ahead of profits.' In Mary's opinion:

If we were to do qualitative evaluation over time, we would learn what really works and what we could improve upon. We would not need to reinvent and experiment to the detriment of the client groups. We would not rush on to the next political imperative, but we would stop, reflect and ask the right questions.

In the words of an operational strategy manager, the differences in living in a society with a policy system oriented to just sustainability would be widely apparent. She expressed her conviction that, in time: 'We will live in a society which is cohesive, with an agreed sense of national direction and commitment to it on the part of all of us. That is worth striving for.'

#### *Central government politicians*

In contrast to most other participants, the politicians stressed that social morality already underpins their deliberations and decisions. Their espoused ethical foundations could do with greater exposure so that other policy stakeholders can assess their inherent worth. The Green Party is perceived by other respondents to give ethics more emphasis than the other parties do, through the statements of core values in each of its policy documents.

Ethics are implicit in most responses from the politicians. Judith Tizard asserted, for example, that 'A strong sense of New Zealand values, shared among families, communities and government will give us confidence to shape our future and participate in change.' In her view, government's role is to 'lead as catalysts, not generals or controllers.' Chris Carter noted that the Labour-led government was 'motivated by our long-term vision ... our belief in social justice.' To deliver on this, he suggested that government needs to remain 'flexible enough to be prepared to try new things if a particular policy approach is shown not to be working.' Focusing on relative

poverty, Mark Gosche illustrated the extent and ongoing nature of changes needed, and the responsibility of government to ensure they occur.

In his response to the ‘delivery – what will make a difference’ questions, John Key stressed the need for aspirations to be balanced by economic realism. While he thought extreme right-wing policies would ‘produce unacceptably high social costs,’ he noted that: ‘To become just and sustainable, we need to recognise the direct correlation between national earnings and national spending. We have to live within our means as a country.’ John saw consequences for social justice if government introduced a very low tax rate which would produce insufficient revenue to provide a safety net for those needing assistance. He commented that:

If we had no welfare system, for example, we would see overt evidence of poverty. In this country we do not want to go there. We have a collective sense of what is fair and decent, and we are prepared to pay to achieve this.

Sue Bradford was sure that effective delivery for just sustainability could be achieved through applying goals such as access for all to meaningful work in a thriving economy; sharing resources equitably; the use of social and environmental well-being indicators to assess economic progress; ensuring adequate income for everyone; protection of biodiversity; careful use of renewable resources; recycling for waste minimisation; power-sharing; peaceful conflict resolution; and attention to the dynamics of ‘enough,’ in the interests of sustainability.

Because of the social morality orientation of the Green Party goals, many of them are compatible with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The test for all the espoused political goals, however, is their ‘delivery,’ or application of ideals to the realities of social and environmental injustice.

## **12.4 Key insights among the responses**

In designing what should be, the respondents acknowledged that CST offers an ethical focus which, if applied to policy-making, would increase the likelihood of justly sustainable outcomes. CST affirms the right to decent housing and jobs for those wanting them, as key aspects of human dignity and authentic development. These rights should, therefore, be intrinsic to social policy design, in the views of most participants.

There was a strong sense that government officials should get out among the people and listen to fundamental hopes and concerns, rather than crouching behind hierarchical barriers. Government should exercise a duty of care, oriented towards the poorest in society. People affected by policy should be involved in its design, participating in the debates about who gains, how and why they gain, who pays and who is excluded. Better policy and service coordination is called for, to reduce gaps, overlaps and discrepancies within and among the servicing agencies.

With regard to the destiny – what will be if change is undertaken – CST should be invoked to add value to the policy processes and services. In the respondents' views, government must respond to people's concerns, since part of the proper destiny for all is to be able to afford decent houses, have sustainable jobs and contribute to society.

Government officials were enjoined to demonstrate humility, listen before making decisions and involve others as equal partners in affordable housing development and job creation. Government should intervene to ensure just outcomes when faced with market and policy failure, so that people are

empowered as responsible moral agents to achieve their dreams. To achieve just sustainability, the respondents believed that government must value social and environmental impacts as well as economic ones.

In terms of delivery – what will make a justly sustainable difference – some practical suggestions were offered. Reduction of working weeks in times of economic downturn, for example, would enable the available work to be shared more equitably and give workers more time with their families. With more enlightened policy frameworks, we could all live more simply and sustainably and collectively generate a greater sense of hope for the future.

At the very least, according to the research participants, we need policies that redistribute resources fairly, so that the poorest people are not disadvantaged in comparison with society as a whole. We need a social morality framework based on looking out for each other, with policies that encourage collaboration rather than competition. In making ethics part of our policy-making way of life, we would learn to stop, reflect and ask the right analytical questions.

### *Engaging with the five phases of Appreciative Inquiry*

AI was chosen as the fieldwork methodology for this project because of its potential to generate imaginative thinking in diverse research participants. Many of the respondents worked in poor communities. Others were subject in their roles to political whim and stringent requirements to comply with government's demands, as interpreted for them by remotely located senior officials. AI limited the risk of interviews degenerating into reflections on individual, societal and governance problems. The inquiry was designed to focus on what could be built upon, for a justly sustainable future, which could be imagined and then made real. This AI combination of current

‘positive core’ and aspiration for the future generated raw material to be used in the development of new policy frameworks, in combination with participants’ ideas about policy and services content.

The participants expressed appreciation of the opportunity to reflect on aspects of their work and their hope for a more just world. They see themselves as ‘people resources’ to build a more justly sustainable future. They know what is possible for systemic improvement. They have identified increasing potential for principles of social morality to be applied to their future endeavours. Now they, their colleagues, stakeholders, clients and all of us need government to listen.

The next four chapters explore participants’ specific responses to the cues generated by the appreciative interview questions and the themes they identified as contributions to justly sustainable policy. As the foregoing Section 10.5 has explained, the structure of the thesis discussion now moves from methods findings to substantive policy and service content findings.

The initial focus is on social morality (Chapter 13) and the ethics of just sustainability (Chapter 14). The findings on housing and employment policies are considered next (Chapter 15). Then the emphasis is on the policy system and its servicing implications (Chapter 16). Together these chapters build a framework for realising what really matters in policy-making, once its ethical imperatives are brought to light and an outcome of ‘just sustainability’ is proposed.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **Research findings within a social morality framework**

This chapter canvasses responses from the research participants in terms of social morality – the norms governing our behaviour towards each other in community life (*LE* 1981:24; *CA* 1991:8,15). Its subtext is the application to governance and policy-making of the relational principles of CST. Along with just sustainability, social morality was a key reference point for this project, with its ethical questions on the justice of the impacts of policy decisions on vulnerable people and on the earth.

To reiterate and amplify these questions: In the public policy domain, can we claim to be ‘doing good,’ while some groups within society have poorer life chances than most people, and while degradation of the natural environment through human activity is increasingly obvious? If we could do better, might just sustainability be increased if we made alternative policy decisions? Could the principles of CST inform justly sustainable policy initiatives? If we changed the assumptions in the policy system, what improvements would become evident in society and the environment?

The five research participant groupings were chosen to provide a range of views about these questions. They were asked whether they had experienced or observed dissatisfaction in communities with the objective, relativistic and morally neutral assumptions which underpin public policy-making. Did they think systemic norms about objectivity in policy-making were tenable? Were there more sound ways to ensure justly sustainable policy outcomes?

To build upon the ‘social morality’ framework, interviewees were asked about the potential for consciously applying a set of ethical principles such

as CST to policy formulation. They were invited to consider what norms should be applied to the relationship between individual aspirations and the common good, and how such norms should feed into policy processes and decisions. How could government help disadvantaged people to access opportunities, without affecting their rights to dignity and self-realisation?

These themes and supplementary issues arising from them are the substance of Chapter 13. Participants indicated extensive opportunities, from a social morality perspective (in many instances referencing their thinking to CST) for enhancing justice in the public policy and government service delivery system as it currently operates.

### **13.1 Something's missing: a search for moral anchors**

Research participants had noticed symptoms of moral malaise in society. They felt that, given the impact of public policy decisions on people's lives, there should be an ethical basis to decision-making. Its application should not reflect the ethics of individual decision-makers only. An agreed framework for social morality requires intensive public debate and involves multiple viewpoints. Participants thought that adopting a nationally-agreed ethical framework would increase the likelihood of justice being served.

Respondents explained their notions of a 'good society' and its foundational values. They had all seen evidence of self-centredness, injustice, social decay and ecological damage. Some alluded to an emergent belief that government should exercise leadership by inviting public debate on a sustainable set of national values, adoption of which would progressively enhance social cohesion and reduce injustice. Linda McQuade noted 'a need for common understanding of what is decent.' Megan Courtney saw a need to 'entrench clear understandings so that the leadership helm remains



steady.’ In common with Margaret Crozier, Jan Francis, Wendy Reid and Sue Bradford, Megan suggested that conflict over scarce resources and opportunities militated against unified ethical thinking.

Momentum for ethics-based debate would have to be consciously created, because we lack a tradition for it to happen spontaneously. A senior operations manager and a community consultant both remarked on the immaturity of New Zealand society, compared to its longer established counterparts elsewhere. Both felt that there is no history in this country of intense debate on controversial matters in a recognised and respected public forum. Calling authorities to account through public debate is entrenched as an essential aspect of civic life in some communities. In Wendy Reid’s view, society is less abrasive there as a consequence.

Lyndsay Freer mentioned the social responsibilities of the media in shaping public opinion and hoped for ‘more in-depth analysis of current social concerns, using the influence and exposure of mainstream media to inform the public of important issues and invite reasoned debate on them.’ Lyndsay felt that the media had a public responsibility ‘to drill down more deeply and reflectively on issues of ethics and social morality.’

There appeared to be a sense among NGOs and community advocates, that ethical concerns are lost in neutral, ‘value-free,’ economically focused policy. Wendy Reid, Alan Johnson and Tony Mayow were forthright about this. Yet there is no obvious response at the political or official leadership levels to a perceived lack of moral courage in the policy-making domain. Most policy analysts commented that ethical concerns seldom feature in policy development, and that it is the poorer for the lack of attention to them. Several public servants working in key areas of social policy noted that ethics are assumed, but rarely articulated, by policy-makers.

Politicians, conversely, felt their representative work and decision-making were explicitly driven by ethics. As Chris Carter put it, ‘Why would individuals seek to carry out public programmes, if not to improve society through their active involvement?’ Judith Tizard spoke of the duty incumbent on those who occupy privileged positions in society to take leadership, to ensure that people in poverty are helped to improve their lot.

Government officials noted that within the government system there is little opportunity to stand back from topical concerns. Policy actors lack time to think about the ethical implications of injustice in society, adverse policy impacts or contributions the government should make towards strengthening social morality. Some officials were uneasy with ‘value-free’ official assumptions and with their personal powerlessness to effect change. While they sought ‘strategic conversations’ about how to ‘do good,’ they were doubtful that their organisations would be receptive to such debate.

Several respondents mentioned an absence of moral anchors in society and concern for the consequences of this deficiency in our public policy system. Terry Dibble attributed this to ‘a lack of values in the education system; a lack of values about caring for other people.’ If students are not taught to consider the needs of others, in his view, ‘it is unlikely that they will do so once they reach adulthood.’ Within the political system, this was reflected in Sue Bradford’s concern about dismissive official attitudes to poor people and systemic indifference to community aspirations, commitments and the provision of practical help for those in need.

From the Caritas perspective, Mary Betz expressed concern that the gaps between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ in this country are too wide. She saw a need to reconsider ‘government assumptions and policies that allow

gaps to open up.’ There was concern that the wider these gaps open up, the more abrasive our society becomes. Several Catholic respondents hoped that attention to the moral consequences of our interactions with others might generate a sense of altruism and genuine concern for the well-being of all. If this could be achieved through a combination of values-based formative education and public debate, then politics and policy-making might be influenced gradually for the better.

While it appears difficult to secure common consensus, the need to do so is pressing. As Mary Betz commented, there is excessive importance placed on who subscribes to specific values that might be promulgated, ‘rather than a search for agreed standards of behaviour and a sense of the common good.’ For Neil Darragh, ‘We seem to be going through a change in social values. We are seeking a new common consensus in this country because of the collapse of the old one.’ Increasing cultural diversity creates challenges.

Fr Neil also thought that, despite basic things we all believe in, our social agreements are superficial. He felt that ‘If we came under pressure ... our basic values would unravel quickly.’ There seemed to be more dividing us than uniting us. This view was endorsed by some senior policy experts, who saw rigid ideological, political and cultural differences obstructing consensus and adding to policy-making complexity.

From an international perspective, but one which is equally applicable in New Zealand, Archbishop Charles Balvo noted the difficulties in obtaining agreement on moral standards, given the tension between individual rights and the common good. Reflecting Papal concern, he cautioned against decision-makers abrogating moral responsibility by ‘settling for the lowest common denominator’ as the most that could be achieved.

*Are some western liberal capitalist norms morally deficient?*

Inadequate moral leadership concerned several research participants, some of whose comments had a political dimension. While policy advisers of right-wing persuasion expressed discomfiture with ‘benefit dependence rather than self-reliance,’ others commented on the debilitating effects for low-income people of ‘individualism, consumerism and unfettered market influences.’ Comments from politicians on polarised social and economic policy positions also tended to reflect a left/right political divergence.

John Key captured a centre-right political perspective on rights, roles and responsibilities, describing achievement gaps and disparities as ‘a fact of life’ to be overcome by personal effort. Ruth Smithies, Terry Dibble and Alan Johnson focused, conversely, on structural impediments to some people’s ability to exercise choices effectively, and stressed that society has a role in compensating for injustices. As a proponent of CST relational thinking, Ruth Smithies noted that:

CST acknowledges that people have personal responsibility for the choices they make. After all, we all make poor choices from time to time. But some people lack resilience to recover from them and need more help than others to make their way in life.

For the research respondents, evolving family structures, pressures on social institutions and relativistic moral attitudes have created a moral vacuum in policy-making. As an NGO representative, Alan Johnson commented that: ‘As far as government is concerned, it is a case of how little they can get away with.’ He was concerned at an ‘ethic of neglect as government attends to its obligation in a residual way.’ Moral ambiguity in society, evident in conflicts of values, created scepticism among some interviewees that ethical

shortcomings in a totally market-led approach to development could ever be overcome. Mary Betz noted, for example, that: ‘People who do well in the market economy and focus on individual worth are not often receptive to sharing with those who have less.’ Neil Darragh saw some ‘limited scope’ for applied CST, along with other forms of ethics-based input:

In a pluralist society with a secular government ... the government could not just accept the CST principles as such. But it might be possible to apply the principles, or some of them, to particular social policy problems. CST is a good foundation for thinking about social ethics, but it is not the only word on this. It is one strand of diversified thinking, a distinctive contribution, one among many.

Lisa Beech held similar views to Neil and commented on the many diverse voices represented in submissions to Select Committees. Br Patrick Lynch believed that respectful, judicious and selective application of the CST principles had the potential for challenging and maybe moderating the harsher aspects of the capitalist economy and public policy decisions.

### *Sharing new ideals and aspirations*

The respondents all demonstrated idealism. Many were visionary as regards a justly sustainable NZ society and how a moral consensus and ethics-based policy framework might lead us to it. Government was not seen as the best arbiter of social justice; indeed, the interviewees were adamant that moral standards originate in people’s own hearts and in their communities. Norms that become established in the public sphere reflect the private beliefs of the most influential groups in society.

The role of government in supporting justice needed improvement, because of its expedient processes which appear devoid of ethical thinking, and

because adverse policy consequences have led to injustice. Interviewees were not optimistic that policy thinking would improve, because of vested interests that support current assumptions. For Alan Johnson:

The probability of a greater sense of ethics permeating the policy system is, in my view, minimal. It is increasingly unlikely, the further the needs of socially and economically marginalised people become separated from the prevalent interests of the middle- and higher-income property-owning and voting public.

Local body respondents were clear about moral imperatives for achieving social and environmental justice. Megan Courtney felt, for instance, that in a justly sustainable society, ‘we would find central and local government working together for community outcomes [and] strong relationships based on trust, honesty and good will.’ She also expressed the hope that ‘politics and egos would be put aside and decision-makers would focus on those for whom they are working, rather than on their own vested interests.’ Most respondents wanted socio-economic policy-making to be based on ethical considerations rather than on the expediency of short-term political goals.

### *Renewed interest in values-based education*

Hopes, values and aspirations such as those expressed above are not formed in a moral vacuum. Demand patterns in the education system suggest a search for moral anchors and ethical standards, to offset the absence of them in society at large. Enrolments at faith-based special character schools are burgeoning. Demand comes from families within the church communities as expected, but it is also emanating from those who have not previously been associated with organised religion. What are they searching for?

A manager involved with secondary schools commented on the presence of ‘a moral compass available through religious education.’ He had seen that:

Faith-based schools are becoming increasingly sought-after. Communities perceive that decent values and respectful behaviours are taught there, in contrast to what is available in secular educational settings.

Catholic educators and social justice advocates corroborated this viewpoint. As Linda McQuade noted, ‘The students are taught to care for others, especially those who are economically poor. They become voices for CST once they reach adulthood.’ Furthermore, CST-based values and leadership are ‘taught subtly’ through giving the students practical exposure to social justice. Sister Mary Foy described Catholic schools as ‘seed beds’ for the next generation of CST advocates and ethical community contributors.

The Catholic participants all affirmed that their schools aim to imbue altruism, community service ethics and personal responsibility in students, in the hope that these characteristics would shape their ethical and behavioural standards as adults. The invisibility of social morality norms in our community appears, in the view of many interviewees, to be driving a search for values-based educational alternatives, to influence the behaviour of future generations of leaders oriented towards the common good.

### *Emergent issues in social morality*

In the context of just sustainability, respondents identified moral issues related to our place in global society. Because of unjust distribution of the world’s resources, some societies live in poverty despite there being enough food for all. Widening gaps between rich and poor communities and nations

were regarded as unethical and immoral. David Tutty was eloquent on this point. It also influenced the thinking of Sue Bradford, Chris Carter, Alan Johnson and the Caritas interviewees. As a relatively wealthy country, New Zealand should promote the common good by sharing its resources with those who lack the basics for human dignity. This role fits with the CST principles of international social justice, solidarity and peace.

Respondents also noted a moral dimension to human impacts on the natural world. As David Tutty, Wendy Reid, Tony Mayow and Neil Darragh all observed, New Zealand society needs more appreciation of the ethics of global citizenship, to reinforce similar values domestically. In suggesting ‘an ethic of vulnerability’ as a basis for policy-making, Alan Johnson saw that ‘an ethic of care could drive a genuine policy response to need.’

Archbishop Charles Balvo alluded to moral hazards created by knowledge and scientific development. Human ability to act outstrips consideration of the ethical implications of doing so: ‘For many people the only ethic is that the ends justify the means.’ If there is benefit for some people, especially powerful ones, it is considered acceptable to ‘just do it,’ despite the moral implications or the consequences for social and environmental justice.

### **13.2 Examining a moral tradition: CST in New Zealand**

The participants were asked to consider the potential of CST to augment the public policy system positively; to identify the resources and channels of influence that CST adherents call upon; and to assess the extent to which Catholic advocacy is heard by government. While the Catholic experts ‘owned’ this topic, other participants, especially the politicians, also demonstrated awareness of CST itself, or of similar ethical frameworks in other faiths. Many constructive CST/ policy links were identified.



*Mutual interests, links and divergences between church and state*

Catholic respondents held strong views on the extent of government willingness to listen to advocacy from the churches. Br Pat Lynch focused on the ‘strong public identity of Catholicism in New Zealand’ and on a ‘historical reservoir of community good will.’ As an advocate for, and practitioner of, faith-based education, he has found the Church is listened to by politicians, who are ‘receptive to reasoned persuasion for community well-being.’ He felt that ‘because the Church is not politicised, it is listened to by left, right and centre politicians, most of whom can see the point of its universal social principles and how they might strengthen society.’

In response to a question about the extent to which some of his high-profile Catholic colleagues contribute to debate from a CST perspective, John Key offered a pragmatic view on the place of faith-based input to the ethical aspects of policy decision-making in his political setting:

Some of our MPs are Catholic. The CST principles represent a sectarian view, so do not have direct application in our policy thinking. There is a necessary separation between church and state in this country. [Yet] for those who are Catholic, their own views do influence the input they have into policy debate. The social teaching sits in underneath their contributions to our debates and some of them are very knowledgeable about it.

Caritas workers might find encouragement in the strong support expressed from within the political system by Sue Bradford. She noted that she had found the social encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (Pope John Paul II 1981) an inspirational document, to which she had often alluded in her work with unemployed people. For Sue, Caritas submissions provide a distinctive view

to help navigate ethical dilemmas in public policy. As ministers, Chris Carter and Mark Gosche both found CST helpful for the same reason.

From her interactions with MPs, Lisa Beech had noticed that ‘the ethical approach of CST is helpful to government for political debate.’ This confidence (shared by the other Catholic participants and by some other respondents) about the ‘moral signpost’ validity of the principles themselves is, in Appreciative Inquiry terms, part of the positive inner core of CST – a core with potential to influence policy at its formative stages.

### *Voices for Catholic Social Teaching in New Zealand*

Respondents were asked to comment on the work done in this country to promote the CST principles. Linda McQuade and Lyndsay Freer mentioned the church’s experts such as Bishop Peter Cullinane and the theologian Ruth Smithies, both of whom have presented complex CST material accessibly. They mentioned other avenues for raising awareness through demonstrating CST in action, such as the work of the Catholic social service agencies. This local work represents an avenue for politicians to gain an appreciation of the validity of working to ‘moral signposts’ in their decision-making roles.

The work of the Sisters of Mercy in dealing with social justice issues and raising environmental awareness was noted by regionally-based government officials. Linda McQuade and Elaine Lolesio also expressed the view of Catholic social service workers that: ‘We live the preferential option for the poor [while] not necessarily theorising about it or describing the work in those terms.’ They focus on the alleviation of hardship among vulnerable families and communities – ‘doing good’ in a tangible sense.

Participants were asked where the next generation of CST advocates would come from. Linda McQuade and Sister Mary Foy were clear about this. The CST tradition has endured and will continue because the needs endure. The Catholic schooling system is its continuing source. In Linda's words:

Many students do seem to get hooked into social justice while at school. Then they work in areas where they can put the values they have acquired at school into practice. It happens because the opportunities are there, the values are there, and the students gravitate to work areas that reflect their values.

CST has hard messages making it difficult to 'sell' in our policy settings. Ruth Smithies, David Tutty and Terry Dibble all mentioned that the CST messages about just distribution of property make people uncomfortable, because of challenges to our individual rights and sense of security. Accepting CST means 'We might have to give up something, so we do not want to listen.' Ruth Smithies suggested that 'CST goes against the grain because we are self-centred and materialistic,' focused on power and status. CST needs a new national spokesperson, in Ruth's view, with the retirement of Cardinal Williams. If there is no one to fulfil this role in the Catholic Church, then others may have to lead the moral debate on social concerns through their churches' interpretations of social and economic justice.

### *Connections between CST and public policy*

CST provides 'guidance on the way people should live their lives in relation to other people' (Ruth Smithies). Public policy also has a relational basis, in that decisions made to serve one sector in the community affect other groups, because of our fundamental interconnectedness. For Chris Carter, the CST principles and the Christian socialist tradition 'provide a moral underpinning to governance.'

In commenting on the links between the paradigms of CST and public policy, Lisa Beech noted that ‘government appears receptive to input about the environment but gets defensive about poverty.’ Some of the participants such as Alan Johnson, Mary Foy and Sue Bradford, whose work involves community concerns, were also critical of government’s apparent denial of the existence of poverty and vocal about a pressing need for social morality to be translated into action to alleviate it.

As right-wing MPs, John Key and Judith Collins both affirmed the need for social programmes to alleviate hardship and open up people’s opportunities to make sound choices. As left-wing politicians, Chris Carter, Mark Gosche, Sue Bradford and Judith Tizard all stressed the need for government to redress market failures, which had caused hardship in society in the first place. A Labour-led government was in place at the time of the research interviews and its representatives in the research all acknowledged that strategic policy work was needed to ensure just sustainability.

Lisa Beech identified Select Committee submissions as the ‘main interchange with government’ for Caritas. She was concerned that the principles of CST not be quoted out of context, especially in influential places such as Parliament: ‘Caritas takes care to ground the CST principles. It is too easy and too risky just to pull out the key quotes.’ David Tutty also felt that the integrated approach of CST was essential, ‘because of the risk to social justice posed by minimalist government structures and involvements.’ He noted that: ‘the common good, environmental stewardship and the option for the poor all have to be considered together.’

Since the policy community and the politicians have no collective allegiance to the whole CST package, it is inevitable that they select aspects of the

tradition that are helpful to them in articulating their own positions. The CST literature also demonstrates this tendency, as evidenced in the media-led debate following the release of *Caritas in Veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009). Lisa Beech had often noticed that: ‘Since CST is neither left nor right in the political sense, people pick out of it what they want to use.’

I found the interviewed politicians more receptive to the potential of CST as a contributor to policy thinking than I had expected. Their awareness of the compatibility between CST and the drivers for social policy might generate impetus for direct CST input to policy formulation, thus emphasising ethics rather than expediency. Levels of receptivity to it were much less evident in the bureaucracy, however, nationally and locally, reflecting Ahdar’s (2001) ‘Wellington worldview’ which was alluded to in Chapter 5.

#### *Current levels and avenues of CST influence on public policy*

As Archbishop Charles Balvo, Ruth Smithies and David Tutty all observed, concern for the poor was always in the Catholic Church’s consciousness. It tended traditionally to take the form of charitable works, rather than efforts to change the structural causes of poverty and alienation. Justice as a driver for action, rather than charity, entered the political arena relatively recently. It originated from left-wing politics, as a basis for collective responses related to human rights. Right-wing politics, on the other hand, supports the notion that individual wealth is always at the disposal of those who earned it, and that poor people should be helped by charity and voluntarism, rather than by claims on other people’s wealth.

CST has a relatively low profile in political and policy circles and in society at large, even among Catholics themselves. Interviewees were asked why this might be so, since the tradition potentially has so much to offer. Ruth

Smithies, Terry Dibble, David Tutty and Neil Darragh all attributed public disinterest to prevalent individualistic attitudes in society. Ruth pointed to widespread unwillingness to consider the CST view ‘because responsibility for the well-being of all is hard to take.’

CST notions of human interdependency and the ‘social mortgage’ on private property are not recognised in our meritocratic society. In David Tutty’s view, therefore, it is politically unwise for government to promote policies implying common rights to private property. The prevailing ethic is that what you work for is yours, unencumbered by responsibility to anyone else. As Ruth Smithies observed, ‘There is a tendency to blame people for their own economic misfortune ... a lot of judgmentalism which makes its way into policy incentives and sanctions.’ Such social attitudes dismiss responsibility for sharing one’s property in solidarity with those less fortunate. Most of us grudgingly view taxation as our social contribution. Since this stance is so entrenched, ethic-based oversight of policy processes is needed to ensure social, economic and environmental justice is served.

#### *Potential for future CST influence on policy*

Despite the differing world views informing CST and public policy development in New Zealand, respondents noted the presence in our community of common understanding about fairness and decency. This understanding is said to underpin public debate and input to political decision-making processes. Organisations such as Caritas have capitalised on this broad social consensus, while respectfully presenting a distinctively Catholic approach to the issues.

Politicians and analysts are persuaded by practical approaches that lend themselves to concrete analysis and quickly produce political mileage. So if

a grounded, practical and tangible approach is taken, to get politicians and their constituents to engage with justice and sustainability, then according to Ruth Smithies, ‘the CST principles have to be applied to the realities of the politicians and to the issues faced by their constituents.’

Sustainability was at the forefront of many interviewees’ minds, reflecting awareness of global warming, resource depletion, pollution and climate change. Linda McQuade had seen ‘opportunities for CST to promote solidarity with future generations.’ She thought that ‘while we are self-centred, there is an understanding of the seriousness of climate change.’ Ruth Smithies observed that it is important for CST to provide guidance on ‘our relationship with the earth and how to sustain it, as CST evolves from its anthropocentric position to a new position on ecological sustainability.’

Ruth Smithies also observed that there are some valid criticisms of CST itself, but these are not motivated by resistance to its principles. These criticisms hinder systemic acceptance of CST as a guide for policy-making. As several participants mentioned, and Catholic commentary confirms (Hobgood 1991; Elsbernd 1995; Curran 2002, Vallely 1998; Massaro 2000a, 2001; Coleman 2005), innovations are needed in the Church. These include a need for more critical social analysis; changes to its own hierarchical structure; new roles for women; analysis of its anthropocentric environmental position; and more tolerance of aspects of liberation theology to assist ethical analysis of policy outcomes and consequences.

### **13.3 Key insights among the social morality responses**

In recognising that social morality has taken a back seat to relativism and unfettered freedom, most research participants suggested that the wellbeing of society and authentic development of individuals are both compromised

by prevailing amoral stances on matters which have ethical connotations. As amoral attitudes permeate public policy-making, powerless people bear the consequences, as many experiences of the research respondents and their clients demonstrate. We need to retrieve a shared sense of social morality.

In the view of the Catholic participants, the social morality framework of CST could improve processes of policy development and implementation. In framing their research responses within their own value systems, others made similar assertions – that there is a need for greater attention to the ethical aspects of government decision-making and for sufficient time to consider the ethics of possible policy impacts prior to implementation.

The above discussion highlights interviewees' responses to moral issues. Many deeply-committed public servants and community advocates, in fact, work from a strong ethical basis and do their best to help their clients. Yet localised energy is not obviously paralleled in national strategies or official communications. Social morality seems to be left to chance in national settings, but that is where leadership by example has to emanate. It is not reasonable or effective to leave this up to local workers. The interviewed politicians also came across as committed to ideals, so what is there in the system, and where is it located, that dilutes all the energy?

Some answers emerge in forthcoming discussions (Chapters 16 and 18) which outline potential for CST and AI to influence systemic assumptions in governance and services. In the meantime, however, Chapter 14 traverses the appreciative interview findings in terms of the second ethical framework for this research, namely 'just sustainability.' In this second domain, the participants canvassed the issues of empowering civic participation, social justice and environmental justice.



## **Chapter Fourteen**

### **Research findings within a just sustainability framework**

As this research evolved, I came to view ‘just sustainability’ as a secular version of CST. As explained in Chapter 2, just sustainability combines social justice and environmental justice. While it does not address spiritual transcendence, it is a useful framework to guide our temporal interactions with other people and the Earth. These interactions are the building blocks for public policy. I aimed to elicit views capturing present realities of just sustainability in New Zealand. These views would then provide a platform for considering how just sustainability might be fully achieved.

The integrated concept of just sustainability was new to most participants, but their own work had invited reflection on its components to a greater or lesser extent. Discussions on just sustainability elicited three themes which attest to its worth as a moral anchor and ethical signpost for policy-making. These were social participation, social justice and environmental justice, all linked through the interviewees’ own frameworks for social morality.

#### **14.1 Participation in purposeful and cohesive communities**

In exploring social participation and cohesiveness, we discussed values and aspirations in the first instance and then canvassed the norms and structures that do, or should, underpin these values. Participants wanted policy-making to stress community strengths, rather than focusing on deficits. Some, including Chris Carter, Mark Gosche, Judith Collins and some senior policy advisers commented that the CST principles (and their equivalents in other

faiths) provide a helpful normative framework and that social cohesion and wellbeing could be enhanced through closer attention to them.

Views varied on the optimum role and current performance of government in promoting social cohesion. As far as John Key is concerned, 'The rungs on the ladder of opportunity are broken for some people and they do not have good future prospects as a result.' In 'advancing social and economic goals to make New Zealand more prosperous,' he wanted opportunities to be 'fairly distributed across all cohorts and groups in society.'

This approach assumes that equal resourcing and contributions will produce equal outcomes and that social justice and attention to the common good will follow economic achievement. Such an assumption has not been borne out by social reality in this country, as Sue Bradford and Alan Johnson have long attested. Their prescriptions, which could improve social cohesion by enabling our communities to build their own resources and strengths, rely on acknowledgment by government that injustice has systemic causes. As Alan Johnson pointed out, 'There could be a conscious choice on the part of New Zealand society and its government to reduce the increasing socio-economic gap between poor people and the rest of NZ society.' Commitment to this is not apparent at the moment because the economic and voting power lies with middle-income earners, not poor people.

Rose Leonard, Tony Mayow and Jan Francis advocated, in their own terms, what Alan Johnson encapsulated as 'policy settings that would ensure that everyone has a real stake in community well-being, through encouragement of collective approaches and looking out for each other.' Such approaches would strike a balance of roles, rights, responsibilities and contributions that would enable New Zealanders to access opportunities through our own efforts and encourage our participation in our shared future.

*Valuing, celebrating and giving voice to cultural diversity*

With the gaps between rich and poor expanding, participants noted the difficulties faced by indigenous groups and recent immigrants in fulfilling their goals in society. In commenting on gaps in housing and employment outcomes, they emphasised the need to alleviate difficulties affecting many people's ability to avail themselves of opportunities in life. Instability and transience for poor families have been exacerbated by job casualisation and outsourcing. Participants commented on cumulative and disproportionate impacts on ethnic minorities of market-led policy decisions in the key domains of social policy such as employment and housing, made by both right- and left-wing governments.

A sense of injustice experienced by Maori permeated many of the interview responses. Participants sought government support to iwi and hapu, to help them develop localised responses to business development, job creation and the shortage of affordable housing. Pauline Kingi identified a need for government agencies to 'encourage and support the thinking that comes directly from Maori to government.' Others expressed aspirations as to how a justly sustainable society would embrace diversity. For Hon Judith Tizard:

In this country, no one is starving, but there is in some families and communities a poverty of spirit. It can be alleviated by engaging them in the stories of our national heritage and by sharing cultural experiences and values, to increase their appreciation of different viewpoints.

To achieve just sustainability, Rose Leonard envisioned Pacific people becoming 'a critical mass empowered through tertiary education to drive their own destinies.' For Rose, just sustainability also meant that: 'other migrant groups would be integrated in NZ society, contributing cultural perspectives while belonging to this place.' She visualised Maori as 'shapers

of their own destiny,’ in a society where they would be ‘economically empowered, with their cultural capital valued intrinsically as an economic force for them.’ In these circumstances, for Rose Leonard, Judith Tizard, Tony Mayow and Jan Francis, our community would become less polarised and our growing diversity would be celebrated.

*Enabling effective participation in democratic and civil processes*

Celebration of cultural diversity is a worthy social objective, but for effective social, political and economic participation, it is not enough. Tangible policies, strategies and redistributed resources are needed, to eliminate injustice and create just sustainability. The participants were expansive and diverse in their views on what is needed, where, for whom and why. Themes of respective responsibility, policy responsiveness and expectations of governance pervaded these conversations.

A former politician suggested that: ‘Government has indicated willingness in principle to involve local people in decision-making, but structures for effective power and resource devolution are not yet in place.’ Experiences of the NGOs in contracting with government departments supported this view. For Sister Mary Foy and others, the NGOs are hindered in their work by power imbalances and one-side accountability regimes.

Reflecting on the social consequences if poor people are not able to participate in society on an equal basis, John Key observed that government makes a contribution to social well-being, but does not, and should not, do it alone. The state does not have to lead all policy initiatives. Pauline Kingi captured its proper role with her comment that ‘it is important to know when you are not in charge.’ Several participants made the point that government’s role is to serve and facilitate participation, rather than controlling and limiting local potential. Social cohesion does not mean

control. In the views of several respondents, corroborated by literature on bureaucratic systems (such as Lipsky 1980 and Sowell 1995), government departments often forget that.

In terms of the subsidiarity principle, participants were asked to identify strengths in community development in New Zealand. With what kinds of organisations do they reside? Who has the capacity and opportunity for strengthening community resources, in the interests of local democracy and purposeful self-reliance? Not surprisingly, the NGO respondents were energetically and informatively vocal on this subject.

The NGO sector is effectively providing a range of services under contract to government. Yet it is treated as a poor relation as regards government resourcing. Contracts are widely used but there are no partnerships with NGOs. Jan Francis has observed, moreover, that community organisations distrust government because its agencies are not approachable or accessible. 'This is counter-productive because each side needs the other to achieve its aims.' Jan described settings where:

Wasteful power games are played, rather than having mutual understanding, recognition and information-sharing. Some government agencies exercise 'power over' by withholding key information from service providers, which impedes their ability to provide the best services to those who need them.

This view was corroborated, off-the-record, among local agency services staff and by some NGO representatives themselves. NGOs are in touch with local realities and responsive to local needs. Yet the government's adversarial contracting mechanisms suggest that their local knowledge is not valued. The principal/ agency contracting model is seen as engendering subservience and competitiveness, not collaboration or partnering.

## **14.2 Social justice as a fair distribution of benefits and burdens**

The research participants explored the implications of social justice, as a subset of just sustainability, for New Zealand policy-making. All of them focused on ‘fairness’ (Rawls 1971/1999), ‘capability-building’ and ‘access to equal opportunity’ (Sen 1992) as the determinants of whether social justice prevails in our communities or not. A need was expressed for effective links between the various parts of the public policy and service delivery systems, so that clients’ access to the latter would be improved.

The environmental aspects of just sustainability were not at the forefront of most respondents’ thinking initially, but supplementary questions elicited awareness of the key connections between social and environmental justice. This section focuses on the former, while the latter is canvassed in section 14.3 to follow. In both sections, the ‘justice’ component relates to all people and every person, interdependently.

Social justice was contextualised for some respondents in the relationships between people, places and institutions and for others in the broader concerns of peace, justice and sustainability for all of humanity. As David Tutty put it, ‘All of us have some sense of the ultimate good that frames our own life journey’ but we do not often reflect and act upon what will support the journeys of other people. Altruism, or ‘gratuitousness’ in Pope Benedict XVI’s terms (*CIV* 2009:34) was viewed as being in short supply at a personal level, and institutional frameworks appear not to incentivise it.

In defining social justice, participants emphasised the key aspects of material well-being which should be available to all in ‘a society in which all have enough to eat, a good house, adequate clothing, educational

opportunities, access to health care and freedom to work, to provide for their families and create a better world' (Mary Betz). Several spoke of social justice as an ethical force in sustainable communities, local and small-scale local economic development, effective civic participation, empowerment, self-determination and capacity-building that would lead to self-reliance.

The politicians had considered the implications of social justice, from their ideological standpoints. Chris Carter alluded to government's planning processes as 'motivated by our belief in the importance of social justice.' Sue Bradford emphasised the right of access to suitable housing and to jobs, with legislation to underpin such rights and repudiation of any structural assumptions that would undermine them. She advocated for 'social policy to ensure full employment, an end to poverty, and the means to a fulfilling life for everyone in this country.' For Mark Gosche, social justice would be tangibly evident when 'barriers to good health, education and housing are removed.'

### *Manifestations of social injustice in New Zealand*

In the course of their work, all research respondents had observed social injustice manifest in New Zealand as relative poverty. Br Pat Lynch described this as 'the inability of low-income families to maintain living standards consistent with human dignity, comparable to those of society in general, because of being below the poverty line.' Many interviewees attributed the increases in socio-economic disparity to neoliberal macroeconomic policy. Level playing fields or the absence of them were a recurrent metaphor in the research conversations, as were rising tides and sinking boats. Judith Collins identified this trend succinctly:

Many who lost their jobs in the 1980s were unemployed for lengthy periods and some never regained the work ethic. Maori and Pacific families and some new

migrants were particularly affected by this. Attitudes of hopelessness and worthlessness caused by prolonged unemployment led to anti-social behaviours. Welfare dependency became the norm for many affected families and they were never able to break out of this pattern.

As indicated in Chapters 2, 4 and 7, the cause-and-effect arguments about unemployment and poverty are polarised along left and right political lines. In the interviewees' replies, this distinction is represented by Judith Collins' view that unemployment generates dependency and hopelessness on the one hand, and Sue Bradford's view that poverty is the cause of hopelessness and inability to access educational and job opportunities, on the other.

In common with NGO interviewees, Sue Bradford castigated the welfare benefits as 'too low to enable people to live on them, entrenching poverty with no relationship to the real cost of living.' Alan Johnson and Lisa Beech observed that 'Working for Families' was less helpful for beneficiaries than for low-income workers. If the need for assistance was demonstrated, the source of income should be immaterial, to avoid social injustice. As Lisa Beech pointed out, 'not everyone is in the position of being able to work.'

With decreased affordability and widespread concerns about construction quality, housing was also seen by respondents as a source of social injustice. This related to the ability to obtain sustainable employment, and pay for suitable accommodation. The difficulties include inadequate size, structural defects, unaffordability, overcrowding and homelessness. The combination of low wages and high housing costs creates relative poverty and injustice.

### *Connections between social and economic justice*

For a social services manager, the goals of government suggest social and economic issues should be addressed together, since 'national development



is not just a case of economic growth and business profits.’ John Key also emphasised these links: ‘A stronger economy will produce better social outcomes, with less reliance on the state and better choices for everyone.’ John felt that just sustainability would not come solely from growth, but from ‘a good balance between social demand and economic reality.’

Some respondents in non-government roles were sceptical that government and politicians know what to do to achieve sustainable employment in a manner that would mesh social and economic policy objectives justly. This concern was shared by some government officials. As a senior policy adviser opined: ‘The social sector, churches and NGOs advocate for full employment, rather than the government taking this as its ethical starting point for its social and economic policy.’

Alan Johnson attributed the pervasive nature of social injustice to economic policy decisions as well as those in social policy. In describing Labour-led interventionism as ‘paternalistic’ he suggested that the government of the day was ‘presenting a social policy package that purports to do good, but is not measuring honestly the effectiveness of what is being done for whom.’

Chris Carter took the view that, as Housing Minister, his government had responded to need, through the social housing construction, leasing and purchase programmes and the reintroduction of income-related rents for state houses. Social and economic policy approaches were combined, to improve the access to affordable rental housing for those in the lower socio-economic deciles. He noted that progress had also been made in the area of mortgage guarantees to facilitate first-home ownership, an area of concern for many of the research participants. A common view among other participants, however, was that government would have to commit to more direct action and resourcing, rather than principles, theory and strategy, for any real improvement to be seen.

Interviewees were asked whether the market economy was conducive to social justice. Most felt it was, because of the individual freedom underpinning it, provided government could intervene to protect poor people. Several mentioned systemic market failure in policies such as housing, which, from an ethical perspective, would require government to intervene. Inevitably, suggestions as to the nature and extent of such interventions varied according to respondents' political views.

Ruth Smithies acknowledged the work of Cardinal Thomas Williams in calling government to account in the 1980s and 1990s for its policy impacts on vulnerable people. Neil Darragh and Mary Betz mentioned individual gain rather than social good as the primary economic driver in a capitalist market setting. Neil commented that: 'The common good is assumed to flow from free market processes, but this does not happen in practice.'

Lisa Beech felt that, given the reduction in living standards among poor people despite economic growth, 'a more just economic system is needed to ensure equitable access to the essentials for living decently.' Mary Betz offered a perspective from theologian Gregory Baum, who believes that the open market is, in Mary's summation, 'good for discretionary commodities but not for the essentials of life.' Terry Dibble could see a justly sustainable future only if 'everyone has the opportunity to show initiative in earning a living, supporting their families and contributing to their communities.'

### *Distinctions between charity and social justice*

The participants were asked whether they thought our politicians distinguish between charity and justice in social policy-making. For Ruth Smithies, this

question ‘goes to the heart of what positions politicians have on the role of the state.’ Historically, right-wing politicians attributed to charities greater roles in helping the poor than left-wing and state-interventionist politicians had done. The responses of Chris Carter and John Key offered an interesting contrast in orientations.

In Chris Carter’s view, government has a leadership role in ‘helping people to take opportunities to shape their lives positively.’ John Key, on the other hand, stressed shared responsibility. For John, government has a responsive, but not initiating, ‘safety net’ role, because of ‘negative consequences to society if people needing assistance are not helped.’ The CST definition of the common good (OA 1971:46; CIV 2009:7) can be juxtaposed against John Key’s and Chris Carter’s differing perspectives on government’s role with regard to charity and justice. In CST, the common good is fostered by four interdependent preconditions for social justice, namely ‘solidarity, human dignity, subsidiarity and the preferential option for the poor’ (Coleman 2005:527). As Ruth Smithies pointed out, this means that charity is a virtue, but justice is a responsibility on all of us, including government:

Social justice refers to the obligation to organise society and all its institutions in such a way that it is life-giving to all its members. Social justice is every activity which promotes the common good. As charity refers to the voluntary giving of help, it is not an obligation on all members of society.

### *Social justice as equal opportunities or equal outcomes*

Since there is extensive ideological, theological and philosophical debate on ends and means in the domain of social justice, the interviewees were asked whether equal opportunities or equal outcomes should be the starting point for government’s social policy. Most participants thought that equal

opportunity was the logical place to start, and that equitable outcomes might emerge later. The policy goal should be stated as the desired outcome, while the opportunity is the means to the end. A prevalent view was that raising expectations through policy settings would lead to better outcomes:

Personal choices, family lifestyles and personal agency are all bound up in this. If policies ensure that opportunities are equal, then so are chances of achieving positive outcomes. That is as much as government can do (Wendy Reid).

For Rawiri Brell, in common with John Key and Alan Johnson: ‘You can not have equal outcomes without equal opportunities, but you can have equal opportunities that do not produce equal outcomes because of personal characteristics affecting results.’ In recognising other variables that influence people’s ability to use opportunities to achieve outcomes, Neil Darragh noted that ‘not everyone can be treated equally. Some people need special provision because of their circumstances.’

Judith Collins saw the purpose of social policy as ‘creating opportunities, because these are needed before positive outcomes can be achieved.’ She noted that personal factors have the greatest influence on outcomes and that the role of government is to give people tools to make effective choices. John Key stressed personal responsibility and motivation as greater drivers for success than external stimulants. In New Zealand, most barriers could be overcome with effort:

There should be equality of opportunity, but not necessarily of outcome. I believe we need to hold onto the sense that people themselves, through their own choices, make the difference to their own lives. There will be equality of life chances and potential for success if people take responsibility for accessing the opportunities in this country and make an effort to realise their own dreams.

Threaded through these discussions were CST themes of interdependence and solidarity. There were recurrent observations that no one achieves on their own, despite the importance of personal agency and responsibility. Equal opportunity is the starting point for outcomes that represent success in the view of those who aspire to them (Rawiri Brell). No one should be prevented from attaining their highest and best ends through a lack of community support, for themselves as persons and for the intrinsic value of their efforts (Rose Leonard).

*Aspirations for social justice and how society would need to change*

As outlined in Chapter 9, the use of AI was intended to generate momentum for positive change by inviting participants to imagine, design and express their aspirations for a justly sustainable future. In offering goals for change, Terry Dibble illustrated the CST/AI connection. He hoped to see:

Social policies built around the CST principles: recognising the potential of everyone; opportunities for optimum personal development; policy incentives to work for the common good; protection of the natural environment; respect for cultural diversity; moral recognition that we are all interdependent; and removal of pernicious influences in society.

Articulating social change and then influencing politicians to act upon it was a key focus for Lisa Beech of Caritas, who ‘would like New Zealand society to eliminate poverty, not just alleviate it.’ Alan Johnson shared this view, as did Jan Francis, Megan Courtney, Wendy Reid and senior policy analysts who, off the record, identified possibilities for greater justice in their work. Members of the latter group either expressed a need for attention to social morality, or were receptive to its possibilities for generating a climate of just sustainability. David Tutty emphasised inclusiveness and solidarity, with his

vision ‘that we live more simply and sustainably and that we see ourselves as connected to the poorest people on the planet.’

### *Implications for public policy in New Zealand*

The interviewees identified diverse challenges for government, to facilitate ethically sound approaches to policy-making and service delivery. Ideas ranged from the application of moral principles; through creating avenues for public dialogue and relationship-building; to detailed role definitions, policy responses and social programme initiatives. Detailed ideas are covered in Chapter 16 on policy-making, governance and service delivery, while some generic suggestions are canvassed briefly here.

Margaret Crozier was concerned, for example, about the ethical implications of distance between decision-makers and the people affected by their stances on issues that are crucial to social justice.

People in decision-making roles are constrained by their own ideological theories guiding their interpretations of what is happening and what its causes are. They are not experiencing the hardships for themselves, so can ignore them or make judgments about those who are experiencing them. No one talks about the ethics of this. Ethics are off the agenda.

Alan Johnson and Rose Leonard felt that government was the only player big enough to absorb impacts of economic trends and policy decisions. Alan suggested that, despite this, ‘Government wants to control significant assets without taking risks,’ which infers abrogation of leadership responsibility. Judith Collins expressed concern that government agencies see themselves as a public good, even as purveyors of social justice: ‘Some of the traditional social justice-oriented thinking is unhelpful ... It comes from

people in privileged positions... feeling sorry for people experiencing hardship and wanting to do things for them rather than with them. Misplaced sympathy and control just make the situation worse.'

Some government interventions were regarded as interference in private concerns or issues which could be resolved by local people on their own account. As Judith Collins commented, 'There are fundamental problems with government controlling, funding and running everything. Communities have the energy and ability to deliver more effectively. Often all they need is some help with resourcing to do so.' CST offers the principle of subsidiarity and its subset of supplementation to deal with this issue.

As several participants noted, the allowance of sufficient time in the policy-making process for formative evaluation and analysis of potential impacts, prior to political announcements and policy implementation, would obviate this kind of problem. There was little optimism, especially among the policy analysts, that the system would be changed to accommodate this, because of political pressures. Nevertheless, there was widespread acknowledgement that change was needed and that it might have to be slow and incremental.

### **14.3 Environmental justice now and in the future**

Environmental justice became part of this research when I realised that neither social justice, nor economic justice can stand alone as over-arching goals. Human acquisitiveness and economic growth have the propensity to outstrip the physical resources of the earth and damage it irretrievably. We are surrounded by evidence of the need to protect the environment, manage waste, avoid pollution and conserve non-renewable natural resources. Many of our social expectations, accepted policies and current practices militate against doing so.

In preliminary conversations with potential research participants, it became apparent from their experiences that environmental benefits and burdens are inequitably distributed, as socio-economic ones are. Powerful individuals and groups have more, and better, resources and the prevailing systems of governance normalise that. Accordingly I searched for a concept that would link social, economic and environmental justice. As indicated in the theory supporting this project, I found such an idea in the discourse on sustainable development, specifically Agyeman and Evans' (2003) notion of 'just sustainability.' I found also that a theme of environmental concern now permeates CST, as taught by Pope John Paul II (1987, 1990) and Pope Benedict XVI (2005a, 2005b, 2008c, 2009a). I observed that, in conjunction with the Commissioner for the Environment, Sustainable Aotearoa NZ (2006; 2009) had developed in-depth research on 'strong sustainability.'

Mary Betz, a Catholic environmental expert, defined environmental justice, identifying the core moral issues faced by all societies and policy systems: 'Environmental justice means treating the earth with respect, as an intrinsic part of creation, independent of humanity but sustaining human life.' Rev Neil Darragh, also a Catholic environmental expert, elaborated:

Eco-justice focuses on the reality that when the environment is degraded, poor communities bear the brunt of the impacts first and most severely. Social ecology provides the insight that human damage to the environment is caused by some societies, or sections within them, to a greater degree than others.

In commenting on the references to environmental justice throughout the encyclicals, 'if you know where to look for them,' Lisa Beech referred to Pope Benedict XVI's request 'not to get apocalyptic about environmental issues' because humanity can and should address ecological problems of its own making. Lisa cited the pontiff's 'moral approach to the issues,'



highlighting a comment in his (2005a) inaugural address that: ‘The external deserts are growing because the internal deserts are so vast.’ The Pope alluded to the need for each of us to steer away from consumerism.

Neil Darragh was unconvinced about the validity of the stewardship principle, which had been the CST expression of a normative relationship between people and the Earth: ‘Humans are really bad at looking after the Earth, so why should we subscribe to any suggestion that we can, or should, manage it?’ Application of the precautionary principle (if in doubt as to the impacts, don’t do it) meant that ‘we should back off, leave it alone and not try to manage it.’ Of course this has not happened and is not likely to. As several participants noted, economic distortions create ecological injustice. This is evidenced by inequitable access to clean environments; wastage; habitat damage; contaminated waterways; and compromised air quality. Our housing and employment policies are both implicated in this.

New Zealand has not yet had to deal with major ecological damage or resource shortfalls, but large urban footprints cause concern. Participants cited examples of damage: ‘At Paritutu, a large industrial chemical company polluted the air and land for years with dioxins.’ A trade-off was made in favour of growth and employment, as Mary Betz indicated, but ‘at an unacceptable cost to the natural setting and to people’s health.’ Economic concerns outweighed ecological impacts: ‘Action was taken to stop these practices only when people reported health impacts. The focus was on people, but not on ecological damage as an injustice in itself.’

Among Auckland participants (given the city’s congestion and pollution), traffic management, transport policy and budgeting trade-offs all generated comment about unjust, unsustainable practices. Social service managers noted the injustice of wealthy people living close to the centres of commerce

and employment, while low-income people had to live further out of town and pay more for transport to their lower-paid jobs.

*Eco-theology and 'new spirituality' in our relationship with the Earth*

Catholic research participants alluded to a spiritual relationship between us and our planet. As the secular discourse on environmental sustainability gained momentum, so did parallel thinking on its theological implications. Insight is now available from CST sources with potential to guide public policy towards ethical imperatives for policy and resourcing decisions. Three Catholic eco-theologians in New Zealand were accessed as research participants. These were Dr Mary Betz, Fr Neil Darragh and Sr Mary Foy. Additional eco-justice commentary came from other Catholic respondents.

Sister Mary Foy advised that her community is engaged in 'a spiritual journey to understand the place of humanity in the cosmos.' For Mary and her colleagues, 'Spirituality of the earth is about advocating environmental responsiveness, as a community in relationship with the whole of creation.' Neil Darragh observed that Sister Mary Foy and her community apply in practical ways the key ideas in eco-theology, such as the 'intrinsic value of creation' and 'earth-centred spirituality.'

Rev Neil Darragh pointed out moral pitfalls in present political, academic and technological approaches to sustainability: 'Development has now come under suspicion among theologians, because of its expansionist growth focus which is not sustainable.' For Neil, 'sustainable development is seen in theology as a term with an inherent conflict. "Sustainable sufficiency" is a preferable alternative, since sustainable development will lead us down a cul-de-sac due to its intrinsic contradictions.' An environmental policy

developer and urban planner concurred, describing sustainable development as ‘a road to nowhere, a bureaucratic bandwagon.’

### *Environmental justice and the market economy*

The conflict between economic demands and environmental needs is an area where power-based trade-offs carry ethical implications. Prioritisation of claims is always contestable. Social justice demands that everyone who wants to work should have access to a job and that all should be housed adequately. On the other hand, environmental justice demands that human development should not compromise nature. As Margaret Crozier noted:

No society has yet found effective ways of addressing the relationship between social development and inequalities exacerbated by the market economy. The connection between the two is profoundly important, especially the impacts of economic growth, which assists in job creation but has environmentally adverse consequences.

Megan Courtney focused on the environmental impacts of economic growth commenting that, faced with unsustainable consumerism, we should be able to ‘scale down our expectations about what is essential for happiness.’ Mary Betz corroborated this, in the context of carbon emissions trading: ‘Policies that allow people to pay to damage the environment miss the point. The damage is morally untenable, irrespective of its cause.’

For Neil Darragh: ‘The concept of “enough” coming from 1960s environmental politics has much to recommend it. Oriented towards social justice, it advocates everyone having just enough, rather than having the huge gaps between rich and poor that are evident at present.’ Margaret

Crozier also referred to the ‘politics of enough’ as ‘important seminal thinking on sustainability and the need for consumption to be reduced.’ She emphasised that ‘we need different understandings about what is ‘enough’ in the sense of consumer goods.’

Few research participants had reflected on the environmental impacts of social and economic policy as an integrated, cross-sectoral problem, but all were clear as to the nature of the ethical issues needing to be addressed in future policy development. The Green Party was prominent among those who had made these strategic connections in their own policy work. As Sue Bradford confirmed, work had been done on sustainable housing design. In addition: ‘Some work has been done on our economic development policy, on economic growth with regard to sustainability and what we take into consideration when thinking about these two issues together.’

Work on environmental sustainability had also been undertaken by the policy unit of Housing New Zealand. Blair Badcock advised that heating systems had been upgraded and insulation installed. Greg Mossong reflected that the Corporation’s decision-making now ‘takes account of the four dimensions of sustainability.’

### *Implications of environmental justice for policy-making*

Interviewees were asked to consider consequences for policy-making if just sustainability became the guiding principle of public policy, underpinned by the CST principles. The key issue identified was the management of trade-offs among policy options. The RMA 1991 was considered helpful, with its ‘precautionary’ ‘intergenerational equity’ and ‘polluter pays’ principles. While there is policy debate about whether ‘sustainable development’ (implying growth) is really sustainable, there is support for the legislative

focus on sustainable management. The key point made by participants was that all our social, economic and cultural aspirations have to be managed within the carrying capacity of the earth, irrespective of whether an anthropocentric, technocentric or ecological perspective is taken.

The free market was considered by most respondents not to be conducive to environmental justice. From an ethical position that no human development should compromise nature by damaging it beyond recovery, what, then, of the growth inherent in job creation and housing development to address shortfalls in supply? What if much-needed housing provision or economic expansion to provide jobs ruins the ecosystem? Participants made the point repeatedly that policies developed separately, and resourcing decisions taken in isolation, preclude cross-sectoral coherence and hinder progress towards justly sustainable outcomes.

#### **14.4 Key insights among the above responses**

In their appreciative interviews, the research participants were highly responsive to the integrated concept of just sustainability and supported its use in policy-making as an ethics-oriented expansion of the ‘sustainable development’ strand in government’s inter-sectoral work. The concept was seen as a means to address the concerns of social equity, in concert with minimisation of adverse impacts of necessary human activity on the planet.

There was recognition among the interviewees that significant ethical concerns had been lost in neutral, ‘value-free’ policy-making. The widened gap between rich and poor people was evidence that neutrality assumptions were not working for the New Zealand community as a whole. Their impacts were seen in unstable social mores and an unsustainable economy. Ideological differences among political parties seemed less crucial than the

need for a government and public institutions that demonstrated ethics-based leadership in developing and implementing justly sustainable policy.

The Appreciative Inquiry elicited that respondents also wanted a new public discourse anchored in a rediscovered consensus on social morality. They hoped that the expediency of short-term political goals might be replaced as the core driver of decision-making by a strategic focus on the common good, marked by equality of opportunity and offering scope for the authentic development of all. In the discussions there was a pervasive sense that CST and its equivalents in other Christian faiths, as the bedrock for just sustainability that had served humanity and the earth in the past, could now challenge and moderate injustices in the capitalist system.

The above discussions reflected a close correlation between the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as a framework for social morality, and the secular concept of just sustainability. This correlation is explored and illustrated further, through examining the research findings for housing policy and employment policy in Chapter 15, and for governance and policy responsiveness in Chapter 16.

## **Chapter Fifteen**

### **Research findings on housing and employment**

This chapter outlines the views of the research participants on aspects of housing policy effectiveness and that of the job-seeker assistance services in the employment policy domain. These domains were selected for their importance to individual wellbeing, common good and just sustainability, and because they are concrete policy areas in which to ground the earlier theoretical and methodological work.

#### **15.1 Decent housing as a pre-requisite for human dignity**

The participants canvassed housing ethics, realities and policy responses. They offered well-informed perspectives on the housing policy system; local housing market information; tools for policy analysis; impacts of current policies; potential policies traded off and systemic assumptions. Catholic experts related the housing policy impacts to the CST principles, especially human dignity, social justice, the option for the poor and the universal destination of created goods.

Consideration was also given to the impacts of wider economic forces on the ability of low-income households to secure decent affordable housing – how much redistributive housing assistance there should be, for whom, and in what forms. As Blair Badcock (Chief Advisor Housing Sector Policy, HNZC) commented, recurrent issues permeate housing policy debate. State housing stock numbers and distribution; the balance of supply-side and demand-side policies; affordability of decent housing and government's

involvement in home mortgages are ‘concerns that are always on the table irrespective of a specific government’s views.’

Of particular interest to the research participants were the Accommodation Supplement (AS) (\$990m per year for some 311,000 households); provision of state housing (69,000 dwellings and 10,000 families waiting for one); the state rental construction programme (\$200 million yearly for a net increase of 1200 homes up to 2007, but reduced by two-thirds subsequently); and the income-related rents subsidy (\$436m for 91% of state tenants in 2007 and then rising to \$507m in 2008-09) (HNZC 2009b; Collins 2009). Most respondents commented on the links between health, education, capacity to hold down a job and ability to access decent affordable housing.

#### *Interviewees’ key concerns for housing policy*

If a state house is not available, low-income families have to cope with poor quality private sector rental housing. Financial strain creates transport and budgeting difficulties, which compromise affected families’ access to health care across the generations. Disadvantage was interpreted as public policy failure, as well as market failure requiring government intervention. For Alan Johnson, scarcity of state housing posed a problem, along with doubt that the social allocation system was equitable:

The Social Allocation System is a rationing system, rather than an assessment of need followed by appropriate assistance to all who require it. Those in housing stress are on welfare benefits and low wages renting in the private sector.

Catholic and NGO respondents identified groups who are not well-served by housing policy. These groups comprise large extended families (many of



them Maori and Pacific peoples), solo parents, low-waged and beneficiary families, older tenants, disabled people, migrants without funds, refugees, children of poor transient families experiencing disruption to learning, those in sub-standard accommodation and homeless people. For all of them, according to Linda McQuade: 'Policy should ensure that there are enough state houses, that rents are affordable, wages are sufficient for families to afford to live somewhere decent, and that taxes are used to ensure all this.'

For people not included in the disadvantaged sectors itemised above, home ownership represents the optimum route to housing quality and stability. Madhavan Raman advised that Housing Strategy consultations in 2004 had indicated a need for: 'government intervention ... to give low to medium-income people a chance to get into their own homes.' Reliance on the banking system was not working for everyone. It was too volatile in terms of market-related funds availability. This is still the case, six years later.

### *Appropriateness of housing types in NZ*

Respondents were asked whether New Zealand had enough houses, located suitably and of acceptable quality to provide decent homes for all its residents. 'In crude numerical terms, yes we do,' according to Blair Badcock, but the stock is not necessarily well-matched to the needs of the population, nor to its ability to pay for them. While there are enough houses, they are not well-distributed to meet local needs. Many are poorly utilised: 'The big houses are in Remuera, but most big families are in Mangere and low-income large families cannot afford Remuera rental costs' (Br Pat Lynch). Many rental properties in affordable locations are old, poorly constructed and inadequately maintained. Interviewees pointed out that garages, sheds, unlined sleep-outs and buses are frequently occupied by state rental applicants. Sister Mary Foy noted that: 'We go into temporary housing where children live on garage floors and in sheds.'

Looking out beyond current policy parameters, Brian Donnelly could see a need for greater acceptance by the housing sector of tenure options such as shared equity, sweat equity, rent-to-buy schemes, community housing and shared ownership. For Brian, acceptance of new models might result in the construction of large, affordable homes for big families and extended family groups. Imagination and innovation were needed to address policy gaps and gain leverage through joint property development opportunities.

### *Affordability of decent housing*

Affordability is the biggest issue for housing equity. Three known causes of affordability difficulties were (1) debt servicing (outgoings-to-income) ratios for rentals and mortgages, despite the AS; (2) deposit gaps for home ownership; and (3) wage increases falling well behind house price increases. Alan Johnson and others had seen ‘low-income people worse off because of house prices rising more quickly than wages or welfare benefits.’

Some thought government should tackle the housing affordability problem by boosting the economy so that average wages would rise to make homes more affordable. There was consensus that having to pay 40% or more of a low wage in rentals or mortgages is unjust. Market forces exacerbated the difficulties faced by first home-seekers. These forces included developers’ land banking activities cited by John Key and Chris Carter, and baby boomer rental investment, mentioned by Rose Leonard and Alan Johnson.

While state tenants enjoy the Income Related Rent policy, officials and local leaders saw it as a poverty trap. For Madhavan Raman, ‘home ownership with low-interest mortgages [is] the only way [for families] to get a stake in

the community.’ Mark Gosche saw potential for low-income families to secure a home of their own, ‘if they are realistic about where and what they purchase and build, go to less expensive localities and start with a small home’ as previous generations did. For Brian Donnelly, government has moved from helping the ‘working poor,’ with the ‘demise of direct involvement in mortgage lending,’ so the New Zealand Housing Foundation aims ‘to influence the market independently, with a focus on affordability.’

From the diversity of respondents’ views on housing affordability and its contributing influences, it is clear that the solution is not in the hands of government alone. As Brian Donnelly noted, the bureaucracy should listen more constructively and not officiously ‘burn people off,’ when they make innovative suggestions. Government should work in partnership with other community interests to address the significant housing affordability issue.

*Eliminating homelessness – an ethical issue related to human dignity*

While there are not many homeless people in New Zealand in the sense of ‘sleeping rough,’ their presence was considered an ethical issue. Questions were posed as to the normative role of the state in accommodating homeless people and whether eliminating homelessness would be realistic as a policy objective. As Blair Badcock pointed out, the definition of homelessness accepted in the housing sector is broader than ‘sleeping rough.’ It includes ‘temporary and sub-standard accommodation in cars, garages and caravans; un-serviced and unlined sleep-outs; gross overcrowding; violent household circumstances; and cases with a pending eviction.’ This parallels the international literature on homelessness (Neale 1997; Chamberlain and Johnson 2001).

The Monte Cecilia Housing Trust exemplifies the social justice orientation towards homelessness. The need to house homeless poor people and provide support to them has increased since the 1990s when, in Elaine Lolesio's opinion, 'the state house market rents policy wiped everyone out.' Denise Wiki (Community Relationship Manager HNZC) had formed the view that 'we could help to address the situation of most of those 'living rough', if they wanted to be helped.' As Minister of Housing, Chris Carter viewed the issue similarly:

Homelessness in the sense of 'living rough' is often seen superficially as a choice by individuals. It is frequently associated with substance abuse, or with unsafe housing and family arrangements experienced by some young people. In terms of numbers of homeless people, I do not believe there is a large-scale problem of homelessness in this country.

There is evidence of homelessness in our major cities. A limited stock of emergency housing is run by church groups under contract to the Ministry of Social Development, to assist with extreme cases of need. Elaine Lolesio advised that the Monte Cecilia house in Mangere, founded according to CST principles, provides for 12 families at a time. There are staff social workers assisting with housing, health and social services. As Elaine elaborated, 'Our level of demand is always high, because of the cost of private sector housing. We receive 40 to 60 inquiries monthly for housing.'

While the Monte Cecilia house is of a good basic standard, some of the other emergency facilities are 'awful places to live' (Sister Mary Foy) so people need state housing. Transience and disruption creating people's need for emergency housing place added stress on families which are already experiencing hardship on several fronts.

### *Government's strategic role in housing provision*

Chris Carter stated government's housing goals in social democratic terms, invoking the Labour Party's leadership in social housing: 'Our core aim is to provide safe, affordable housing for all New Zealanders. The orientation to social housing is fundamental to Labour Party policy.' John Key's view on the strategic role of government in housing had some elements of direct involvement, but he preferred the use of subsidies to counteract market failure, rather than state provision of housing as a social good in itself:

In housing the state plays a role. Its involvement reflects a market failure with regard to affordable housing. If housing were only delivered in the open market, homes of a decent quality would be unaffordable to low-income families.

Brian Donnelly suggested that government was unsure of its own proper role. With Madhavan Raman, who was frustrated by policy inconsistency and political expediency, Brian cited contradictions in policy to substantiate his view. Alan Johnson felt that government should reconsider the existence of tax incentives available to individual investors to buy multiple houses: 'This trend has fuelled inflation and redistributed wealth unjustly. It is socially and economically damaging for the community as a whole.'

### *Thoughts on the Social Allocation System for state housing*

Respondents commented on an enduring mismatch of supply of, and demand for, state housing. Mark Gosche observed, and Sue Bradford concurred, that 'there is a big role for public housing. In this country we need to spend more and build more of it until we no longer have long waiting lists.'<sup>1</sup> In the views of community-based service providers such as

Alan Johnson and Elaine Lolesio: ‘Government should keep adding to the state housing portfolio to bring the waiting lists down and remove the pressure on poor families.’

In its Social Allocation System (SAS), Government has a framework for housing allocations, with four categories of need (see Chapter 7) and priorities within them (HNZC 2009b:12). For Madhavan Raman, ‘this meets fair and equitable guidelines developed with key housing advocates.’ Elaine Lolesio endorsed this, but other NGO representatives thought otherwise. For Alan Johnson, ‘all the housing policies need resourcing improvement.’ Elaine Lolesio had reservations about the SAS priorities, and felt that in the interests of social justice, some of these should be changed:

The SAS does not work as well as it might. There is the case where the worker’s base income is low, but the overtime is high enough to put people above the income threshold for a state house, even though overtime is temporary and can disappear at any time.

As respondents indicated, poverty traps are an inadvertent consequence of policies relating to eligibility criteria and abatement levels. State housing access is no exception. Injustice can be created inadvertently out of policies which are well-intentioned.

#### *Access to income-related rents and state rental tenure*

Government now invests over \$500 million per year in the Income Related Rent subsidy, which is accessed by 92% of the 69,000 state tenant households (HNZC 2009b:64). The IRR (with a budget estimate of \$540m for 2009/10) replaced a right-wing supply-side policy which had combined

market rents for state houses with demand-side assistance through the AS. The market rent policy was unsuccessful in terms of affordability for low-income families, and its replacement in 2001 had received a qualified endorsement, as Brian Donnelly indicated:

The income-related rent system works well for the poorest section of the community, but it should not be government's only mainstream housing programme. The Corporation's tenants are not all desperately poor, once they have benefited from state housing for a time. There are many other families whose circumstances lie between full reliance on the state and ability to service a commercially-sourced mortgage.

As Brian pointed out, the New Zealand Housing Foundation has developed alternative models for that middle group which offer security of tenure with reduced government involvement. Use of such alternatives has the potential to ensure that state houses remain occupied by families which have no other housing options.

While government's efforts to restore the state rental portfolio to its former size were recognised, frustration surfaced among Housing Corporation respondents and NGO representatives. They cited contentious issues such as the time it takes to add dwellings to the portfolio, given the size of the waiting list; the mismatch of a portfolio of mainly three-bedroom homes with a waiting list clientele of large families or sole parents with one child; and the inability of the HCNZ to compel tenants to transfer or vacate dwellings when their family size has reduced, or their financial position suggests they can afford to make their own arrangements.

Tenure is contentious among HNZN managers trying to balance portfolio supply with urgent need. Tenants' expectation of tenure rights is inter-generational: 'Even the [adult] children feel entitled to remain in what they

regard as the family home after the parents are gone.’ Madhavan Raman reflected a widely held view about personal responsibility: ‘Government has to ask itself about its own role in housing provision. It is here to provide help for those in need, not lifetime security. Those who are no longer needy should take responsibility for housing themselves.’

### *The Accommodation Supplement*

Along with state housing, government’s major input to housing policy is the AS, designed to distribute government housing assistance to more families, rather than subsidising only state tenants and mortgagors. AS take-up rates both for rental and mortgage assistance have grown to the extent that it would now be hard to change the policy direction, because ‘Government spending on Vote: Housing is \$2 billion annually. Of that, \$1 billion is applied to the Accommodation Supplement, leaving the same amount for all the other work’ (Chris Carter). The AS budget allocated for 2009/10 is \$1.166 billion (Johnson 2010). In Brian Donnelly’s view, the AS is ‘a huge investment, but the individual entitlements are static.’ This affects rental supply and yields. Contraction in the rental supply would increase costs, which could cause overcrowding. Brian noted ‘the same old problems because of the same old policy settings.’ He felt that ‘New approaches should be given more credence,’ but doubted that the policy system could initiate them or respond effectively to the innovative ideas of organisations such as his own.

### *Declining levels of home ownership*

John Key reflected a widely held view that ‘home ownership is part of the rite of passage to maturity, demonstrating effort, achievement and success.’ In his view, ‘Government has a role in helping families achieve home



ownership because of substantial market failure. Rising interest rates due to economic policy contribute to the lack of housing affordability.’

During the 1990s the government’s home loans portfolio valued at \$1.4 billion was sold to the private sector. In Alan Johnson’s view, housing had become a ‘residual’ area of social policy. He felt that: ‘The loans portfolio should be rebuilt to underpin the availability of affordable housing for low-income families, as it did in previous decades.’ In response, as Chris Carter noted, ‘it takes time to restore what has been lost, especially when other funding demands arise in the meantime.’

For those who remember low-interest mortgages as the core business of housing policy, there is satisfaction in seeing official acknowledgment of the centrality of home ownership in our society. Chris Carter suggested that the ‘Welcome Home’ mortgage guarantee policy was a start, but large-scale government involvement in home mortgages was hindered by the high capital cost and interest-rate subsidies involved in provision of affordable mortgage finance for low-income families, and by the cost of the AS.

Housing advocates, including Rev Charles Waldegrave (2000) and the Salvation Army (Johnson 2007) call for government to return home ownership rates to their former levels (also see Waldegrave *et al* 2006). It is suggested periodically that the ability to capitalise an AS entitlement could replicate the access to child allowances formerly available to first home seekers as Family Benefit Capitalisation. Housing Corporation interviewees confirmed there would always be a need for social housing (whether state- or community-provided) but that there is also a need for incentives such as deposit assistance to move people on from state housing, either through affordable access to private sector rentals, or through home ownership.

### *Ethics and expediency in housing policy*

In terms of just sustainability, the ethics of housing activity, providing shelter, economic growth, job creation and human impacts on the environment are linked. Participants considered whether government uses housing policy as a lever to stimulate or dampen economic growth – for example to create jobs in the construction industry in times of high unemployment. They reflected on the ecological impacts of housing and the means employed by government to foster sustainable resource usage.

Housing Corporation staff members thought the link between expansionary housing policy, housing portfolio upgrading and the economy was not overt in 2007, though it had been in the past. Madhavan Raman felt that: ‘This may be a lost opportunity for government, since housing provision is an economic and social strength.’ Blair Badcock suggested that: ‘Government could pump more funding into social housing, with effects on the building industry and job creation,’ but that at the time (2007) it had other priorities. A new government saw priorities change in 2008, with the onset of global recession. State investment in its housing portfolio acquired some traction again in 2008, in the form of a Jobs and Growth fiscal stimulus package (HNZC 2009b:23-4). This initiative linked funding for public infrastructure developments to job creation.

The CST principles of human dignity, the preferential option for the poor and the universal destination of created goods have ethical implications for housing policy and services. In reflecting on her experience as an exponent of CST and social justice in policy-making, Sister Mary Foy expressed concern that ethics was not dominant in policy thinking. Her work was often compromised by ‘funding streams that are very structured and inflexible.’

Madhavan Raman identified conflicts of interest within the Corporation's policy and servicing roles, creating ethical difficulties: 'The provision of policy advice to the Minister is done by the biggest landlord in the country, so it operates in its own best interests. There is a role conflict in the way the advisory work is placed within the system. It is not neutral.'

Another significant systemic barrier to effective and ethical policy-making was identified. To illustrate it, Madhavan Raman commented that:

Government is too tied to ideologies. National would sell it all; Labour would support all the poor people. This political lurching from left to right destroys any sense of strategic direction and makes housing policy incoherent. The two main political strands have quite different views of what the role of government should be. This does not make for consistent policy.

Housing policy stakeholders expressed strong views about the ethics of official assumptions and processes. Alan Johnson was asked whether it was possible to inject a greater sense of ethics into the policy system: 'I am hopeful and I think it is possible, but I am also realistic. The probability of a sense of ethics permeating the policy system is minimal.' Brian Donnelly was similarly dubious about ethical motivations for policy processes:

If government considered the ethical implications of its policies, then all the [housing] needs would be met. If the people in positions of influence were driven by the ethics of what was the right thing to do, their policies would produce a different sort of commercial and social balance across all the key sectors. But politics dominates, and that is the reality we live with.

All participants alluded to links between the core aspects of social policy – health, housing, education, and employment – along with 'domino' effects

of impacts on outcomes. Accordingly, employment was selected as the second policy domain for detailed examination. If you do not have a job, you cannot afford a decent home, and your family's prospects are at risk. In CST terms, your human dignity and family stability are compromised, as is your ability to develop yourself to your highest potential and contribute to your community.

## **15.2 Work and authentic human development**

In the views of the research participants, and from the CST perspective, engagement in work matters. It is tangible evidence of our contributions to societal well-being, as well as our ability to provide for our families. As Pope John Paul II emphasises in *Laborem Exercens*, we find fulfilment through work and social contribution, since 'work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth' (LE 1981:4).

The Catholic experts' views reflected the CST focus on working conditions and access to jobs. NGOs focused on community development and local job creation. Community consultants stressed sustainability. Policy analysts and service delivery managers contributed from their detailed policy knowledge, while politicians related employment policy-making to the macroeconomic framework. All mentioned opportunity and choice, regarding vocational training opportunities, fair wages and adequate income support during periods of unemployment.

Within the broad reaches of employment policy, the employment aspects of this research concentrated on the efficacy and justice of services available to job-seekers – the 'active labour market policies' (Johri *et al* 2004), which differ from the passivity of income support. Supply/ demand matching was explored because it affects job-seekers and their families. Social justice

issues relating to low-waged and beneficiary families were examined, since the needs of poor people lie at the heart of CST. Working conditions, fair wages and aspects of the labour relations legal framework were touched on briefly, because of their traditional places in Catholic Social Teaching.

Participants commented on income adequacy; resourcing and suitability of programmes for job-seekers; Work and Income case management; access to training; and whether full employment is achievable. In assessing policy effectiveness from an ethical position, respondents were asked what works well in the policy arena and the frontline service centres at present, what does not work so well, where improvements could be made and how employment policy should contribute to just sustainability.

Respondents emphasised the necessary links between job creation, training and job-seeker assistance programmes. Concepts such as a 'living wage,' 'full employment' and 'structural unemployment' were examined. Local business and community roles in creating employment were discussed, along with relevant government assistance. Current employment policy and service ethics were assessed against the principles of CST, to identify links to authentic human development and just sustainability.

### *The scope of employment policy and the role of government*

Employment policy, labour market policy, economic policy and welfare policy are closely connected. The links include economic stimulus for job creation; quality and sustainability of jobs available; effective matching of people to training courses and jobs; equity of access to vocational training; eligibility for income support and transitions between education, training and work. Employment policy operates at the programme level, oriented towards individual job-seekers.

Aspects of employment policy included job-seeker case management and work-testing; policy reorientations such as Jobs Jolt; work brokerage and the Job Bank; development programmes such as CV-writing and interview skills training; access to career planning services; capacity-building programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships, Compass for sole parents, the Training Opportunities Programme; Youth Transition Services and the Gateway Programme. Key issues included programme accessibility, relevance, cultural sensitivity, coherent pathways to employment and fairness of the institutional expectations of job-seekers.

The range of subsidies was often mentioned – such as Job Plus, Task Force Green, Job Connection, the Training Incentive Allowance, the Enterprise Allowance and the Work Transition Grants. The labels of these policies, programmes and subsidies often changed, but the aims remained the same – to assist job-seekers to obtain work, or to give businesses incentives to take on more staff. The key issue for the research participants was the extent to which clients knew about these avenues for assistance and were helped to distinguish between them and identify which ones they would find useful.

At the time of the research interviews (2007), the clientele for employment programmes and subsidies comprised 18,000 unemployed people, 46,000 sickness beneficiaries, 83,000 invalid beneficiaries and 97,000 domestic purposes beneficiaries (MSD 2008a). By December 2009, the unemployment beneficiary number had increased to 66,000 (MSD 2010, DoL 2010).<sup>ii</sup> Each beneficiary group had responsibilities with regard to work testing and availability. Identified issues included income support adequacy, as beneficiaries sought stable jobs and sustainable childcare provision once they obtained them. Disincentives to work created by high marginal tax rates in the benefit abatement regimes were a continuing concern.

The four policy domains of economic, labour market, employment and welfare policy are split between four departments of state. Respondents criticised this as a cause of policy incoherence: ‘Intermittent approaches do not work, and fragmentation creates risks to social justice,’ as Margaret Crozier noted. ‘What is needed is a sustained and strategic policy to forecast and match supply, demand, skills gaps, training, development, business support, job creation and employment assistance.’ Margaret Crozier and Jan Francis both commented on the importance of a strategic orientation on the part of policy analysts and decision-makers working in employment policy (skills matching and employment assistance) and in labour market policy (supplying enough workers and generating jobs). In Jan’s view, government ‘lacks the capacity for broad strategic thinking and a national overview.’ Furthermore, ‘employment policy and programme people want job-seekers to “get a job” and get out of the welfare benefit system. There is no obvious strategic overview for this work.’

Margaret Crozier also identified policy gaps in government’s approach to business development, similar to the gaps in job-seeker assistance. She had not seen ‘early connection between local skills networks, seed funding and investment.’ As Margaret commented, ‘private investors tend to be averse to risk, so it is appropriate that government bear some risk in the early stages of small enterprise start-ups and innovative development.’ This requires government itself to leverage opportunities and tolerate risk, to an extent that is not currently the case.

### *Social justice in access to employment*

When weighing the evidence for and against the incidence of social justice in employment policy and service delivery, participants thought that official attitudes to people needing social welfare assistance required improvement.

Bureaucratic, patronising, judgmental and controlling stances were seen to militate against fairness for job-seekers when they accessed welfare benefits and services. Literature on ‘street-level bureaucracy’ (Lipsky 1980) supports this contention. According to Jan Francis, ‘policy-making should start from what would make a difference for those who are disadvantaged in the labour market.’ This is not always the case at present.

Several participants, including politicians Mark Gosche and Judith Collins, mentioned affronts to human dignity and social justice created by labour casualisation and low-quality work experiences. Others pointed out that this still occurs, with continued economic de-regulation and monetarist policy aimed at keeping inflation down:

Underneath the apparently healthy level of [labour market] engagement [in 2007] is a less healthy picture that requires policy attention. This is the high number of workers in transient circumstances, due to precarious, temporary forms of employment, with attendant levels of poverty. This has implications for policy ethics and social justice (Margaret Crozier).

A number of respondents noted that a current gap in urban job opportunities threatened social cohesion. As an analyst observed, ‘the problem is masked at present, because many young people are in training, but there will be too many people in the medium term for the entry-level jobs available.’ Attributing this mismatch to ‘globalised economic investment and jobless growth’ Margaret Crozier had noticed ‘some awareness of this among politicians, but it was not reflected in policy frameworks.’

Many respondents suggested that policy analysts need to talk directly with local people, to understand what hardship means, since their middle-class backgrounds distance them from poverty and disadvantage: ‘Policy analysts



and decision-makers do not experience these hardships themselves, so can ignore them or make judgments about those who do experience them.’ For Patrick Lynch, Mary Foy and Jan Francis, the policy advisers’ remoteness from the realities of social injustice meant that: ‘the policy framework and assumptions need a re-think. Social welfare to help people achieve equal opportunity is a government responsibility, to facilitate employment for marginalised groups’ (Jan Francis). This need intensified during 2008-09 as the global recession deepened and unemployment levels rose.

### *The importance of a living wage*

In Catholic Social Teaching, people are the subject of work, not its object (LE 1981:6-7). Work should contribute to human development and not serve company profits only. Workers should be paid at fair rates, which should facilitate their choices regarding support of their families and their own development. In the Social Encyclicals, particularly in *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and *Laborem Exercens* (1981), there is a ‘work as social concern’ theme that links fair wages to social justice, in *Centesimus Annus* (1991) to authentic human development, and in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) to ethics in business practice.

Respondents commented on New Zealand’s reality regarding ‘living’ wages, and on policy frameworks driving this reality. We have a low-wage economy which, combined with insecure jobs, impedes access to adequate shelter, clothing and food, especially for large families. No respondents believed that the average wage would fully support a family. In querying the assumption that everyone of working age can, should and will work, several participants also identified a need to re-examine the policy balance between rights, responsibilities, incentives and sanctions. Paid work is not a viable choice for some people.

### *Full employment as a policy goal*

Work has a spiritual dimension that links it to social morality (LE 1981:24), so full employment is a norm in CST. Employment policy in New Zealand is ambivalent about it. Respondents were asked whether they thought it was a necessary ethic for policy-making and if so, how it might be achieved. If it could not be realised, then what should government do, to maximise job opportunities for all who wanted to work? Sue Bradford was adamant that ‘Everyone who wants a job should be able to have one.’ Her views paralleled those of CST. John Key felt that ‘full employment is a positive goal to aim for.’ He identified the complementary roles of government, business, intrinsic motivation and education in enabling people to make the most of emergent opportunities.

Participants were asked whether the term ‘structural unemployment’ features in policy debate these days. If they thought it does, they were asked how it is manifest and what it means. If they thought not, they were asked what caused it to disappear. All were asked about its ethics. Ruth Smithies recalled its use during the 1990s, when she was involved in social policy debate on behalf of the Catholic Church, as the Cardinal’s research assistant:

The standard assumption of the 1980s and 1990s was that unemployment should be maintained at around 5% of the labour force, to keep other aspects of the economy in balance, especially to counter inflationary pressures. [It] is contrary to the CST principle of the dignity of work.

All the interviewees recalled the policy assumptions about structural unemployment and the NAIRU, which had emanated from local application of Friedman’s economic theories (see Friedman 1977). Tony Mayow’s view represented the positions of most interviewees on its morality:

Everyone who wants to work should be able to – otherwise what is social policy for? There should not be an accepted level of unemployment. I have never seen why ‘structural unemployment’ should feature in economic policy and it is unethical. People should not be used as economic units to balance the books.

Full employment was seen as an ideal, if not a fully realisable goal. Several participants commented on constraints faced by some people of working age, which might dictate reliance for a time on community support through social welfare, rather than economic independence. Mary Kayes mentioned people ‘who because of personal difficulties may be unemployable.’ Megan Courtney reflected on ‘the impossibility of eliminating unemployment because there will always be some who are unemployable and need to be supported by the community.’ Such support is expected in terms of the CST solidarity principle, because of our fundamental interdependence.

### *Effectiveness of government’s employment policy*

Among responses on the just sustainability of employment policy, only two people mentioned ‘Working for Families,’ the Labour-led government’s policy flagship designed to ‘make work pay.’ For Jan Francis, ‘the employment policy area is a complicated and busy one.’ If community representatives had difficulty navigating the policy and service labyrinth, it was likely the end-user clients would too, which suggests social justice inadequacies. Many participants noted a ‘bandwagon’ effect, with centrally-driven, politically motivated policies designed more for ‘good news’ than for alleviating disadvantage by helping people to secure work. Mary Kayes had noticed ‘barriers to employment researched endlessly, but no one comes up with an action plan,’ while Wendy Reid suggested that:

There are structural problems with the way government agencies design and implement programmes to help people get on their feet. Policy people do not research the local context or talk with local leaders. They just impose what they

think is best, often drawing from overseas experience, and then can not understand why it does not work. We have too much government and an epidemic of futile 'busyness' in the public service.

Despite the AI framework for this research, the respondents' assessments of what works well and what works less well in employment policy generated a lot of negative critique. Participants had seen numerous employment assistance programmes rolled out across the country, with a focus routinely described as 'a numbers game' to 'get people off the unemployment benefit as quickly as possible, regardless of their own needs.'

### *Employment policy, service ethics and the CST principles*

The aspects of CST related to employment policy are respect for human dignity; authentic development; social and economic justice; ability to participate in one's community; the dignity of work; the right to a living wage; the right to decent working conditions and to be represented in the workplace; and the optimum balance between rights and responsibilities. All of these anthropocentric areas of focus were canvassed by respondents. Minimal comment was received, however, on the impacts of economic expansion and labour market growth on the natural world and on how a more sustainable ecological balance might be achieved.

Most participants were of the view that ethics does not drive employment policy. It is influenced by political responses to public perceptions that some people depend on welfare benefits rather than working, and by perceptions that workers should manage their own training and development. On these matters, Margaret Crozier thought that 'ethics does not drive policy. There is an ethical position underpinning it, but it is implied rather than talked about. Whether it is a morally robust position or not depends on how you

view it.’ In the policy literature, Ahdar (2001) and Hicks (2007) have made the same point. In the views of Margaret Crozier, Jan Francis and Alan Johnson, the ethics implicitly promoted by government include: ‘Not relying on the state for anything; the creation of winners and losers through competition; and that other people’s difficulties are not our problem.’ CST is opposed to each of these assumptions.

### **15.3 Questions and insights for housing and employment policy**

Respondents were asked whether just sustainability was achievable in New Zealand. All reflected on the costs of housing and employment-related economic activity, including environmental costs. Some wondered if it is possible to find a just balance among competing claims for social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. Some identified that, as a society, ‘we are facing poverty because our economies are unsustainable.’

Some policy analysts thought there might be an impediment to the use of ethical drivers such as CST in the way the political mandate is applied, since policies go through frequent ideological changes. Yet the strength of CST is that it cuts through political ideology (Coleman 2005:531). Housing and employment policy were both described by respondents as lacking strategic insight, which could be strengthened through the application of the CST principles. Employment policy debate, for example, would have to canvass some difficult questions which were currently not being addressed:

Is finding people sustainable jobs more important than getting the numbers on the unemployment register down by making beneficiaries take any job? Are quotas, targets and pushing the benefit numbers down more important than freedom, rights and responsibilities when these elements conflict with each other? How would employment policy be shaped if it operated from a basis of just sustainability and authentic human development in CST terms?

Ethical and practical questions punctuated the participants' assessments of policy effectiveness. In addition to reflections on policy and programme content, queries emerged concerning governance, policy and services: Why is systemic understanding of policy impacts deficient? Why is it so difficult to forecast labour market trends for job supply/ demand matching? What is government's justification for its residual approach to housing policy, when home ownership affordability has decreased and so many poor people have low grade accommodation? Can publicly funded programmes be expected to fulfil all the needs and claims for assistance?

These are the queries that policy tools such as needs assessment and formative evaluation may have to answer, if we are to develop ethically justifiable new social and economic policy. In canvassing key issues in governance and service delivery, Chapter 16 explores current realities and potential for achieving an ethical orientation in the public policy system.

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<sup>i</sup> The Housing New Zealand Corporation's Annual Report for 2008-2009 indicates that in the 2008-09 year, Government acquired new state houses for \$36 million. This was a smaller construction budget than in previous years. The state housing portfolio was further augmented through purchases and improvements, with an overall gain of 529 dwellings. The Corporation was able to house some 9400 needy families through transfers and vacancies, but with new applications constantly being received, the waiting list remains at just under 10 000 households. Of these, 4197 are assessed as having a serious or urgent housing need (HNZC 2009b). Recent media reports based on interviews with senior Corporation staff members (e.g. Collins 2009) indicate that the waiting list for urgent housing assistance (SAS Categories A and B) is increasing, as is the response time for accommodating them.

<sup>ii</sup> The Household Labour Force Survey for the 2009 December quarter (DoL 2010) indicates an official unemployment total of 7.3% or 168,000 people. The European total is 4.6%, while Maori unemployment is 15.4% and the total for Pacific people is 14%, with youth rates at double the overall proportions (Maori youth 30.4% and Pacific youth 29.8%). Entrenched disparities in access to the labour market have been exacerbated by the 2008-09 recession.

## **Chapter Sixteen**

### **Research findings within the public policy framework**

Housing policy and employment policy effectiveness depends partly on the intrinsic quality of needs assessments and policy development processes and partly on the systems of governance, decision-making and service delivery. To assess the ethical focus of the systems for housing and employment policy in New Zealand, this chapter outlines the views of the research respondents, firstly on public sector governance and decision-making, and then on responsiveness to client need in policy-making and service delivery.

#### **16.1 Governance and decision-making**

The ethics of public policy outcomes lie within the governance domain. Governance entails principles which define the roles, responsibilities and relationships in organisations. These principles create expectations among stakeholders, clarify accountabilities and explain how the organisation will be managed. The governance principles should make it clear that the entity is focused on serving the public good as well as its own specific goals and that it is effective in doing so (Scott 2001:69; Heywood 2002:6, 141).

The strategic oversight and guidance implicit in governance distinguishes it from government, which is more concrete in its focus. Government enacts legislation and regulations to protect the public interest, through controlling activities that might have adverse impacts on some citizens. The public service develops and implements public policies, programmes and services to 'serve the government of the day,' and meet the requirements of the political party which has been elected to govern (Heywood 2002:26).

Governance frameworks, and governments themselves, form part of the public policy system. Their activities have ethical connotations and offer scope for reflection on consequences, especially for vulnerable people. In this chapter, Section 16.1 focuses on the ethics implicit in governance and decision-making, while Section 16.2 canvasses a range of tangible activities within government service delivery and their ethical implications.

Research participants were asked about the place of ethics in current policy discourse, the drivers for political decision-making and the extent to which the moral consequences of policy decisions are considered by officials and Cabinet Ministers. They were asked about the tradition of ‘free, frank and fearless’ policy advice to government, in the light of suggestions that ‘Government only listens to what it wants to hear.’ Views were sought as to the extent to which CST is, or could be, helpful in assessing the ethical status of policy decisions and their impacts in communities.

### *The drivers for political decision-making*

Concern was evident among respondents for the integrity of our political decision-making process, due to perceived shallowness in its underlying analysis. Misunderstanding of our history and cultural framework leads to policy superficiality. Some interviewees identified ‘realism, pragmatism and political advantage’ as dominant drivers of policy, while others suggested that politicians are challenged to satisfy everyone while remaining true to their party ideologies and the expectations of those who elected them. From the social justice advocacy perspective, David Tutty thought that:

Politicians come to the job with ideals ... but practicalities, cost-benefit trade-offs and the political need to balance vested interests all require them to consider



pragmatically whom they want to alienate the least, and why. They want to stay in power. Relative voting power defines whom they listen to and take notice of.

Some respondents were concerned about influential groups driving political processes for their own ends, rather than for the common good. Sister Mary Foy had seen that ‘some politicians work from political expediency and self-interest, rather than looking after the well-being of the community.’ In Terry Dibble’s view, ‘politicians are all motivated by votes. The poorer classes have less voting power than the middle classes. They do not go to the polls.’

Rawiri Brell suggested that different political positions did not necessarily mean better or worse ethical standpoints, while Wendy Reid identified systemic influences affecting the ethics and integrity of political decisions and policy-making. ‘Public policy is driven off knee-jerk reactions to so-called crises; the planning horizon is three years; there is no real vision; squeaky wheels are listened to, despite our efforts to avoid it being this way.’ In Wendy’s opinion, government is ‘stuck in a defensive, reactive mode, risk averse and looking for deficits.’

Integrity in decision-making affects the official end of the policy domain as much as the political end. One of the policy analysts suggested that ‘we all come from an ethical position of some sort. The political process can not be ignored, so the policy developer’s role is to respond to government’s goals and preferences.’ As Rawiri Brell pointed out, ‘people consider the effects on themselves ahead of social benefits, but policy developers have to consider the wider social good.’ One of the other senior policy managers reflected that ‘in an instant world, there is not much opportunity for deep thinking’ and ethical considerations are often compromised.

### *The place of ethics in the policy process*

Policy actors need both theoretical and practical understandings of public policy, its impacts on people's lives and the ethics of its consequences. Ethics, commitments and integrity are tested within the public service when external factors influence the policy analysts and their managers, as Pauline Kingi illustrated:

Many of us have had our personal and professional ethics and beliefs tested by public reaction to some of the advice we have given government. It is challenging in these circumstances to stick to the role of giving objective and considered advice to government, but we have to do it.

The ethical positions of our major political parties are predictable, in terms of their long-standing ideologies. As respondents noted, Labour politicians tended towards the social justice and natural justice end of the social policy continuum, supporting wealth distribution in the interests of equity. National Party members emphasised freedom, choice, open markets and individual rights. For Jan Francis: 'We do not often get to see what the bottom lines are for most politicians – the principles they will not trade. If politicians demonstrated their integrity, we would see evidence of their bottom lines.' Jan wondered what would really matter for them 'to cross the floor of the House and take the electoral or party consequences.'

Ruth Smithies felt that political intent was usually constructive but its realisation left gaps ethically:

In the political arena, our leaders, by and large, want to do what is morally correct and what they believe to be in the country's best interests. My view of our politicians is that ... they are people of good will, but the system in which they work is not conducive to achieving the best results morally.

For Jan Francis, a managerialist trend in the public service compromised assistance for vulnerable people, due to performance requirements placed on state servants: 'It would be interesting to know how many senior public servants are in their roles to do good these days.' Lisa Beech also believed that attention to ethical issues was deficient: 'I can see no evidence that the bureaucracy works with people in an ethically-sound way in its decisions or recommendations. This does not appear to enter the thinking of officials.'

Pauline Kingi and Judith Tizard, on the other hand, felt that there is integrity among staff in government departments: 'In my work I have come across good people who are genuinely trying to do the right thing ... driven by a sense of doing the best for New Zealand' (Pauline Kingi). One of the social services managers thought similarly: 'Staff members want to provide good service. Many are passionate about making a difference for disadvantaged people. There is strong intrinsic motivation among most of them.'

#### *Political expediency and citizens' trust in government*

Several participants felt that trust in government is compromised by political expediency. There was a pervasive sense that when issues arise in government, 'we should engage, but we do not, because government does not listen.' Most interviews were conducted during 2007, when poor ethical standards or ineptitude on the part of government often featured in the media. As a policy analyst put it, 'when scandals erupt, we say that our leaders can not be trusted.'

Ruth Smithies took a realistic approach to the perceived erosion of trust in government:

The ethics of doing the right thing is not well expressed in the government system. The players within it have other priorities because of political realities and pressures. Policy is driven by three expediencies (1) governments like to stay in power, (2) political success depends on giving the impression that tangible results are achieved, and (3) decisions are made on what is perceived to attract votes. Government officials are caught within this system, since they have to meet the requirements of the government of the day.

Participants identified other impediments to trust in government apart from perceptions of self-interest. Much policy is made in isolation from those most aware of the needs and from those most likely to be affected by it. As an analyst commented, ‘the collaboration words are there but there are strong systemic disincentives to do it.’ Clients are seen to fall through policy and service gaps. The impression created is one of institutional incoherence and lack of concern. For Tony Mayow, ethical deficiencies in government’s practices run deep:

Do New Zealanders trust government? No they don’t. Why? Because this government has done nothing to deserve trust and plenty to destroy it, as have earlier governments. Government has to be seen to do the right thing for trust to be generated and it is just not doing that. Its approach is nakedly pragmatic to hold onto power at all costs. All the deal-making creates what I would describe as a ragged approach to ethics.

Some respondents thought there was something in our national psyche that resists power, control and the obvious exercise of authority. While this view was acknowledged as conjectural, several felt that due to our ingrained egalitarianism, we do not deal with power effectively. As a community, we challenge politicians along the lines of ‘What is in this for you?’ This makes it hard for those who enter the system wanting to use its power to effect positive change.

*The convention of free, frank and fearless policy advice*

This issue canvassed sensitive territory. It was addressed because, for many interviewees, important matters related to the ethics of our policy systems could only be discussed ‘off the record.’ People offered diverse views about policy advice in the ‘free, frank and fearless’ tradition. Their concerns related to constraints encountered if they offered advice which differed from an approach already decided upon by government. While no public servants wanted to cause ‘embarrassment to the minister,’ some felt that extreme limitations on suggestions in policy papers carried their own risk, by stifling innovative thinking and debate within government’s own environs.

As Jan Francis noted, ‘Politicians should be able to rely on the integrity of apolitical advice provided by the public service in a free, frank and fearless setting.’ Otherwise, ministers will be told what the officials think they want to hear. ‘Some ministers direct their sensitive queries only to people they can trust, namely their political advisers’ (Pauline Kingi). Several research participants opined that anyone who gives advice contrary to government’s established views does not last long in the system. Furthermore, many respondents felt that integrity and transparency in policy-making were compromised by risk-averse government and a public service full of process managers. For a policy manager, this meant ‘forget the “fearless” – that does not happen.’ He suggested that ‘process managers are far more risk-averse than policy thinkers and more inclined to hedge their bets.’

Mark Gosche offered another perspective. He recalled that in his ministerial role, he leaned heavily on officials until they came into line with Cabinet’s thinking, ‘rather than telling him what was not possible.’ He recalled his frustration at departmental resistance to change, which was not conducive to development of respectful working relationships. Wendy Reid, formerly a

senior public servant, recalled that ‘in some departments, the relationship between the senior staff and minister is adversarial. There is no tolerance for mistakes, so no chance to learn from them.’ As a result of this, ‘it is now harder to give free, frank and fearless policy advice than it has ever been.’ She added that:

The concept of the neutral public servant has gone. There is blatant partisanship in the advice tendered. Why has this happened? Because the environment has become so nasty, there is fear in the system caused by the vilification of officials.

The convention of ministerial responsibility also came under scrutiny by participants: ‘Ministers should take responsibility for what happens in their portfolios, including what does not go well.’ Some respondents were concerned that, frequently, ‘public servants get hung out to dry by their ministers.’ Nevertheless, interviewees generally thought that: ‘People in the public sector have a higher sense of purpose and want to do good, while respecting the challenges of the political role.’ In return, they have the right to expect their advice to government to be received professionally and to be given the attention it deserves. Anything less is an abuse of political power.

### *The best places for central government’s decision-making*

Subsidiarity is a key principle in CST. It means that, for government to function effectively, its process should support people’s right to make their own decisions about matters that affect them. Decisions should be made at the level which is most capable, equipped and closest to the point of impact. Participants supported the principle, but varied in their views as to how it should work in policy-making and public resource allocation.

For Lisa Beech, centralism dominates official processes and ‘there is little receptivity to subsidiarity as a governance principle.’ Several respondents shared Patrick Lynch’s CST-influenced view that:

At present, too many layers of hierarchy and too many people are involved at each stage of the policy development process, resulting in dilution and incoherence. There is too much centralised bureaucracy, process and regulation, which crowd out strategic thinking about real needs and how to address them.

NGOs and consultants working closely with them often saw government as part of a social problem, not as part of its resolution. In the area of sustainable development, Wendy Reid suggested that government agencies lack leadership, knowledge and mechanisms for success. For Tony Mayow, ‘government cannot get on board with the real meaning of devolved power.’ He had found that ‘community development is fine until something comes unstuck, and then government reclaims direct control, and rules from a distance.’ In Rose Leonard’s view, ‘local communities are distrustful of central government decisions because of the remoteness of those making them.’ She had seen ‘local aspirations and good work misunderstood and under-valued.’

Many public service interviewees shared the NGO concerns regarding this perceived gulf in the central-regional-local links. Mutual understanding of roles and needs seemed in short supply and frustration was evident. Views differed as to whether government agencies’ clients were Cabinet Ministers or those who received the services. As one analyst commented, ‘the New Zealand governance model is one of centralised control, complicated bureaucracy, protection of vested interests and political risk aversion.’

From the public service responses to the subsidiarity issue, it seemed clear that greater role definition and clarification were needed, along with more acceptance by the 'centre' that regions could be trusted to make effective decisions, manage risk and allocate resources competently. Regions have an advantage of proximity to the end-user clients and a greater sense of local needs and potential. Centralised 'juggernaut' control (Brian Donnelly's term) was not seen as efficient, effective, responsive or necessary. Nor is it compatible with the CST principle of subsidiarity.

### *Devolution of responsibility and resources*

Participants in NGO and advocacy roles were positive about the idea of devolution, but less optimistic that government would relinquish power sufficiently to make it a reality. Many thought, as did Tony Mayow, that:

Devolution has been characterised by incorrect assumptions about community readiness, poor consultation processes, inadequate investment in the community knowledge base and by gaps and overlaps in service provision on the part of government.

Getting the governance process right was seen as an ethical issue to increase the likelihood of justly sustainable outcomes. Sister Mary Foy noted that government places unrealistic expectations on minimally resourced NGOs. This wastes energy that would otherwise go to their clients and services. Another neglected aspect was that 'local decision-making takes time. People need time to think things through, rather than reacting to pressure.' Lisa Beech observed that 'groups are stretched to the limits by requests for consultation input. Yet if they do not engage with government processes, there is a risk they will lose out on things that are important to them.' Tokenism on the part of government was often castigated by interviewees.



Policy managers were mostly of the opinion that full devolution of responsibilities and resources is risky. 'Major decisions need expert input which is available centrally.' Government servants noted that having major assets managed by an apolitical public service provides a safeguard against misuse of resources. While this may be interpreted by communities as a lack of trust, there are senior staff members in local offices with discretionary decision-making authority and accountability. In agencies such as HNZC and MSD, respondents noted that some policy work has been devolved to Auckland, to make its services more locally responsive.

Pauline Kingi identified the whanau-hapu-iwi structure as a mechanism for devolution of authority to allocate public resources. Wendy Reid believed that 'we should legitimise the bottom-up process, with policy development and implementation in communities, rather than in fragmented agencies.' She felt that 'some politicians are receptive, knowing this is how things should be, but mystified by the challenges in making it work.' While the challenge seemed insurmountable, Wendy thought it was worthwhile pursuing: 'If we could reshape the central government bureaucracy from a bottom-up perspective, we might be able to head down agreed local paths that would make us much more sustainable than we are at the moment.'

Many participants observed that policies are implemented in a rush. Resources and capacity-building are not designed into the initiatives at the outset. As a manager illustrated, 'Here is a policy which needs to be put in place quickly for the Minister to get runs on the board. Recruit someone who can operationalise it without a lot of drama.' Action plans may come later on, but often do not. In addition, 'many recruits are new to the analyst role; recent graduates; new to policy work in general.' This creates tension related to workload coverage and quality, and explains deficiencies when 'the policy function starts to unravel' (Greg Mossong).

Several respondents thought that policy staff inexperience caused policy-making to become fragmented and incoherent. ‘There are hundreds of hands involved in policy iterations at all stages.’ As a consequence, ‘what we end up with may bear little resemblance to the original idea to address a need. Differing interpretations all find their way into the mix.’ Good intentions are foiled by incremental change during the policy process. Change can be self-serving and not always oriented to the common good. Patrick Lynch had noticed that ‘too many departments chip away at new policy initiative. By the time it gets to implementation, it has lost its genius.’

#### *Ethical norms for decision-making and policy design*

Good governance requires that those who exercise it understand the ethics of their decisions. Several respondents commented along the lines that ‘policy depends on a strong, free, ethical public service giving realistic advice with integrity.’ This aspiration was supported in principle by government, but was heavily constrained, as a senior manager identified:

As public servants with a responsibility and mandate to act in the public interest, we have too few reflective conversations about the ethics of our actions and recommendations. The ‘spirit is willing’ but the resourcing is not adequate to facilitate strategic conversations in the course of our public service work.

Reflecting on a former involvement within the public service, Rose Leonard illustrated the quality/speed dilemma in policy development. She wanted to see a focus on ethics at the outset:

To attain a stronger ethical position in policy-making, our policy developers and decision-makers firstly need clarity about what they propose to achieve and why. They need to be clear about what they value and why. They need new ways to value social and environmental impacts and to assess all the costs to those for whom policy does not work.

Interviewees noted that there was often ‘dilution between government’s policy and ministry interpretations.’ Policy managers thought that an ethical approach would have to be driven by politicians, not by the bureaucracy. It would have to be factored into recommendations that served the specific ends of government. As an analyst noted, ‘if an ethics-based policy design framework were used, ministers would still need to be convinced that the recommendations would meet their requirements.’

#### *Receptivity to new paradigms for policy-making*

The policy system is influenced by assumptions, including the separation of the state from the church. As regards large organisations such as those dealing with housing and employment policy and services, a service manager felt that: ‘The greatest direct influence, from a social justice and well-being point of view, is the impact on the client at the case manager level.’ Officials’ own attitudes and values may limit the acceptability of principles of social morality, such as CST, to guide policy-making.

Most research participants did not see the church/ state separation as entirely clear-cut. They saw some potential for agreement on strategies for just sustainability, under the guidance of explicit moral principles. Pauline Kingi provided insight on the power of change from within: ‘If you want to be an agent of change, you can not just deconstruct, but you must show what you can build. I have never forgotten that and I live by it.’

Policy developers and senior staff who sign recommendations to ministers would need to be convinced of the value of an ethical approach. A senior policy adviser had reservations about how effectively this could be done, mainly because of the added time that would be required to analyse the issues more deeply: 'In a 'just-in-time' policy culture, I don't imagine policy actors would be receptive to the idea of having to think deeply about contestable ideas, but that does not mean they should not try to do so.'

Application of moral principles to policy proposals is not a simple task, but requires complex systems thinking. In this regard, Wendy Reid observed that 'there would need to be agreement on core principles and what our big goals are.' A senior manager indicated that most policy actors could look at CST principles and say that its ideas already feature in policy, as: 'Christian principles that have underpinned social philosophy for years. The principles are very broad, so they are interpreted in diverse ways'. He noted that, in our diverse community, 'we can not assume there are cohesive views, even about each key word in the CST principles.' There are debates to be had about them and many views to be considered when developing policy.

For many respondents, the ideal would be to have ethics as part of the policy-making way of life. To achieve this, in terms of the CST principles, we would need to articulate the principles as generic goals, to which all the agencies could subscribe, identify inter-sectoral contributions and align their core business. Top-down leadership and governance would be needed. A policy manager thought the 'CST principles could act as a framework to generate the right questions – those which made analysts think about the moral and ethical consequences of what they were proposing as new policy.'

## 16.2 Coherent responsiveness in government policies and services

In this section, ethical principles and policy theory were grounded in reality as interpreted and experienced by the participants. Challenges were posed for policy-makers to eliminate causes of unjust experiences, while building on systemic elements which already foster just sustainability. Identification of strategic policies and their insertion in government's 'glossy documents' suggested awareness of just sustainability, but more compelling evidence is needed to support any claim that the policy system as a whole 'does good.'

Respondents offered evidence from Statistics New Zealand and the annual *MSD Social Report*, that policy-making and service delivery can not claim to 'do good' for everyone in this country. Targeted intervention programmes have been implemented at great cost. Yet there are homeless people, poorly housed families and unemployed people, who may not be in these positions if appropriate support and direct assistance were provided where needed.

Senior operational and policy managers focused on the structural causes of disadvantage, identifying the need for effective pre-conditions that would enable everyone to exercise choice well. As Rawiri Brell put it:

There are entrenched structural causes [of disadvantage] and there are various ways to address differential outcomes among groups in the community. Where we start the thought process will influence the patterns of our thinking and the conclusions we reach.

Another manager thought that affirmative action through targeted policies and programmes had been diluted: 'There was a political backlash against ethnic targeting and special programmes, but some ethnic groups are

affected adversely by our political structures and socio-economic settings relative to others.’ She was concerned that ‘we have stopped focusing on specific areas of need. The electorate is impatient with targeting and politicians have responded to this.’ In her view, service delivery focus and the quality of assistance have been negatively affected as a consequence.

Sue Bradford attributed disadvantage to the welfare system itself, in that beneficiaries were not receiving a fair living income. John Key and Alan Johnson expressed concern about welfare dependency, but assessed its causes differently. John talked about ‘intergenerational dependency causing hope to break down’ while Alan attributed ineffectual social policy to political timidity about resource redistribution to enable self-sufficiency:

Because of political unwillingness in our low-waged economy to implement economic policies which would actively redistribute profit, many wage-earners depend on government top-ups, thus becoming beneficiaries of the state. In a more just society, households would have enough income to support themselves.

Sue Bradford noted that in the area of environmental injustice, there is a need ‘to be mindful of the impacts of climate change ... to reduce the pressure on the environment and ... its impacts on poor communities, which are most affected by low-quality decisions.’ CST similarly affirms that the impacts of government decisions are inter-related and that justice demands ethical approaches to social and environmental problem resolution.

### *Systemic strengths and opportunities for improvement*

The AI method encouraged people to comment on policy and servicing strengths in government and its agencies, as well as identifying what needed

improvement. Several facets with potential for further development were elaborated on. Some participants thought that the introduction of quadruple bottom-line analysis could effectively chart a course for a sustainable future and identify the steps to get there. While political timing and expediency interrupt policy processes, a respondent noted positively that ‘underneath the public noise, solidly substantive policy work grinds on.’

As an electorate MP, Judith Collins had seen signs of successful local initiatives contributing to people’s lives and prospects:

Despite all the well-intentioned heavy-handedness on the part of government and its agencies, there are some policies and programmes for children and their families which work well and which should continue to be funded. But most of the locally successful programmes are not directly run by government... the local organisation is fully responsible for how they operate and for whom.

Several participants had seen gaps between policy processes and operational implementation, which caused poor programme targeting. As Wendy Reid put it, ‘our current policies and programmes are self-fulfilling. They run on, whether they work or not.’ In Margaret Crozier’s view, ‘policy analysts describe economic and social development issues, without any sense of obligation to check whether their theories will work.’

Policy advisors in Wellington wielded power and influence, irrespective of their experience, because of their proximity to the decision-makers. This had given rise to the preference of Pauline Kingi and others that policy be developed within affected communities, not by ‘graduate policy analysts.’ Wendy Reid and Ann Magee focused on the interpersonal skills required by public servants working in sensitive areas of social policy. Over time, Wendy had observed that ‘really good people get jobs in the public service

as policy analysts and managers.’ Within a year, she had seen them ‘ground down by the system and thinking in ways that are small, risk-averse and focused on compliance.’

*The quality-speed dilemma in policy-making and service design*

Interview questions exploring this theme elicited very strong views, especially from public servants in both policy and operational roles. Several respondents felt that ‘inadvertent impacts and back-downs could have been avoided if the impacts of policies were carefully analysed in the first place. Rushed legislation dictates speed at the expense of quality.’

As well as speed leading to poorly designed policy, it was suggested that there is often a misfit between the strategic policy design and operational implementation. ‘It has been difficult to envisage what the policy designers and legislation drafters had intended and how some aspects would work in practice.’ Not enough attention is paid at the design stage to the way policies have to work in the field and internal consultation was seen as deficient. For many interviewees, ‘separation of policy and operational functions in government agencies is unhelpful.’

‘Busyness’ in government organisations, separation of policy people from operations staff, lean operations, high work volumes and political demand for rapid responses were all cited as putting pressure on the policy system to deliver advice. People expressed concern at the consequent risks to client wellbeing, when ‘everyone responds intuitively to strategic issues which are worthy of more thought at the outset.’ Some public servants noted that ‘even the ministers get cynical about this. They do not trust policy developers, knowing that reflective work has not been done.’ Ministers want work done quickly and they want high-quality thinking. Most respondents believed



that, in principle, government values a strategic and ethics-based policy process, but that reality suggests otherwise.

Greg Mossong had developed an approach that, in his view, safeguarded his organisation from the risk of poorly developed policy and service design and recommendations. He has a methodology for this (a four-step abbreviation of Bardach's eight-step policy cycle). He uses it proactively and finds it 'more useful as a touchstone,' than more complex models:

I employ a four-stage policy model. It consists of (1) monitoring the policy environment, including evaluation, (2) identifying the specific policy problem, (3) generating options to address the problem and (4) responding and implementing solutions. This works as a policy cycle. As long as all the steps are followed, the work unit should not be caught out with an unanticipated policy query. Our credibility comes from being able to give the minister sound advice quickly, so the organisation has to be geared to that objective.

That is certainly what the ministers expect; the presenting issue is whether ethical considerations and policy impacts, as well as political expediency, are integral to their expectations or just taken as read.

### *The need to improve service delivery coherence*

Participants suggested that social injustice can arise because many people in need of assistance are scared of government agencies. 'Directive approaches and controls' were alluded to. Agencies are seen as powerful, inaccessible and often unwelcoming. To offset this impression, they should coordinate their services, to reduce overlaps and gaps in provision. This is needed since they work with families whose adults often have poor English skills, poor educational outcomes, unstable family arrangements, no transport and many children. As a senior policy manager observed, 'it is hard for anyone

exhausted and in need to deal with the system, let alone for people with multiple problems.’ Several respondents mentioned the start-stop nature of pilot projects and the dubious ethics of cutting off resources and services for clients in midstream because ‘politicians want the next big success story.’

### *Predicting and assessing policy and service impacts*

Identification of policy and servicing shortfalls affecting vulnerable people begged important questions. These included whether social impact analysis is ever carried out on proposed policies, or subsequent to their introduction; whether policy evaluation is undertaken; and if so, at what stages in the policy cycle and to whose ends. It transpired that the use of social impact analysis is uncommon in New Zealand, but evaluations have been done, usually after policies have been put in place. The Ministry of Social Development has a Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, for example, but a respondent advised: ‘It is almost impossible for regions to get things onto its programme. Its priority is to evaluate national policies that have been rolled out in the regions.’

Blair Badcock advised that policy evaluation capability has been rebuilt in HNZC after years of depletion during the reforms of the 1990s. Evaluations have been completed on the Housing Innovations Fund, the Community Renewal Programme and Rural Housing. Blair noted that there is ‘an expectation that all policy development in the organisation will be based on evidence. The Corporation now does its own research.’

A senior policy manager commented that in public policy development, the analysts he had worked with had always tried to think about the potential impacts of their proposals and advice to government. While most direct impacts could be predicted, he suggested that ‘It is a lot more difficult to

predict indirect consequences in the social policy area. The process is not linear and effects may not be apparent until a long time later.’ This matters because ‘injustices occur in the area of indirect consequences. We do not understand social processes and impacts sufficiently to produce effective policy every time.’

Respondents advised that social impact analysis is not done prior to implementing new policy. If it were done, ‘teething problems’ that appear post-implementation could probably be reduced or eliminated. A services manager suggested that such assessment is not done because of political pressure, with all evaluative work regarded as ‘risky, political and driven by agendas.’ Wendy Reid had noticed that ‘evaluations of government policies and programmes often get massaged for political purposes, so the learning from them is compromised.’ She had seen ‘communities become totally frustrated with this, to the point where they no longer expect anything decent from government.’

### **16.3 Key insights among the foregoing responses**

Within the AI paradigm, the above aspects of the research project sought participants’ views on the ethical foundations of the policy and service delivery system. I wanted their suggestions as to what was needed and what could be built upon for the future. Government receptivity to community needs and advocacy surfaced as a key issue, along with power-sharing and the pros and cons of resource devolution. Government agencies seemed to involve local experts reluctantly, rather than embracing them for their specific knowledge and commitment to justice in their communities.

The quality of policy-making came under the spotlight, especially regarding the speed with which it is developed and implemented to produce politically

acceptable ‘good news stories.’ Respondents identified the lack of time and incentive for policy designers to apply ethical analysis and use social impact assessment and evaluation, as defects which entrenched disadvantage for affected people and created risks for just sustainability. Many governance assumptions were scrutinised by the respondents and found wanting.

Service delivery in government agencies came in for criticism. Official attitudes to clients were not always seen as helpful. A lack of cross-sectoral integration created incoherence among services administered by different agencies. A recurrent theme was the need to work together to remove all the policy and service gaps, conflicts, overlaps and duplications experienced by clients. The distant location of decisions about programmes and resources was often described as having adverse impacts on service quality, focus and sufficiency. While the identified issues are serious ethically, none of them are insurmountable in practice.

So where do we go from here? Part Three of this study begins with Chapter 17, a synthesis of participants’ views on the ethical issues identified and their manifestation in the policy environment. The fieldwork findings are analysed and interpreted, in preparation for the final chapters, in which theory and fieldwork become ethically grounded in the design of practical policy models, based on the CST principles and the AI methodology. My proposed new frameworks will illustrate potential for the CST principles to contribute to policy-making and service delivery. They will address the ethical policy issues identified above, in the interests of just sustainability and a hopeful, participative future for all New Zealanders.

## **Part Three**

### **Aspiring to a justly sustainable future**

In social research, theory takes us part of the way along a trail of inquiry. From it we can understand a set of principles. Fieldwork takes us a stage further, as we explore ways in which these principles can be applied to real-life situations. Yet the story is incomplete. From principles and practices we move to potential. What could the future look like? How could we shape it?

Part One of this research explored six lines of theoretical inquiry. These anchored its Part Two fieldwork and will underpin its Part Three discussions and conclusions. The theoretical strands and foci for the interviews were:

- Just sustainability, incorporating social justice, equity and environmental justice
- Catholic Social Teaching as it relates to social concern for human dignity and for the environment, and to economic and political contexts for public policy-making
- The learning institutions within Catholicism which foster and maintain momentum for CST and the relationship between church and state in New Zealand
- The effectiveness of housing policy and service delivery
- The effectiveness of employment policy and service delivery; and
- The public policy system as a whole, focusing firstly on governance effectiveness and secondly on service coherence and responsiveness.

Poised on the above foundations, Part Three concerns the future for policy-making in New Zealand. Drawing on respondents' aspirations relating to just sustainability, it deals with interpretation and synthesis of the research findings. It considers their implications for policy and service delivery in government institutions; proposes three applications of the principles of CST and the methods of AI; and draws conclusions about what is possible if ethics, courage and vision permeated the public policy system. It comprises four chapters.

In Chapter 17, I aggregate key themes from the interviews and interpret the fieldwork findings, in terms of the research proposition and questions. This chapter identifies what works well in the policy system; what requires improvement in the interests of the common good and just sustainability; and the potential for CST to inform and guide policy-making.

Chapter 18 deals with the relevance of each CST principle to the policy and service issues identified in the fieldwork and the literature. Each CST principle is applied to specific policy and servicing concerns in government's housing, employment, governance and service delivery domains, with a focus on the goal of just sustainability.

Chapter 19 then addresses the implications of the theory and fieldwork research findings, offering practical new frameworks for policy-making. These frameworks combine and build upon the CST principles, the AI methodology for generating positive change, the strengths identified in the policy system by the research participants and the opportunities identified for positive systemic change. In a series of endnotes, it also suggests avenues for development of more policy-making frameworks based on CST and AI.

Lastly, Chapter 20 draws this project to its conclusion, reviewing the research question, the synthesised findings from the literature and fieldwork and my proposed way forward. It also indicates areas for further research.

## **Chapter Seventeen**

### **Fieldwork synthesis, interpretations and implications**

At this point, the theory and fieldwork data have served their respective roles in populating the research information base. It is now time to consider what the contributions from the 38 research participants mean in terms of the original research question. Chapter 17 interprets participants' responses to the original two-pronged proposition that (1) the public policy system needs an increased focus on the ethics of its outcomes to foster just sustainability and (2) the application of the Catholic Social Teaching principles could sensitise policy actors to the demands of social morality and contribute to ethics-based analytical frames for policy development.

#### **17.1 Generating momentum from the research design**

In the course of the research data analysis, and to progress the original research proposition, I developed a set of overview questions to organise and interpret the fieldwork data. The first 5 questions concerned the present:

- What the participants thought about the suggestion that public policy needed more emphasis on ethics, to achieve justly sustainable outcomes
- What they knew of social justice, environmental justice and just sustainability and how social morality and just sustainability were linked
- How just or unjust they considered recent and current outcomes in housing policy and employment policy, in terms of just sustainability, and the evidence for their conclusions about this
- What works well in the policy and service delivery systems at present; and how the positive institutional core could be built upon; and
- What works less well, or not at all well, in the policy and service systems, in terms of impacts on some groups in society; and how market and policy failures can be remedied justly.

The second group of 5 questions concerned the future:

- What the participants knew about CST and how its principles relate to governance and social policy; focusing on its potential for input to policy and service design, analysis, development, implementation and evaluation
- Why and how they thought that remedying deficiencies would lead towards just sustainability; and what would be different in New Zealand society, its environment and in government if we achieved it
- Their suggestions for the best foci for policy systems improvements and why those foci; where in the system itself and in which areas of housing and employment policy the energy for change should be directed
- Their suggestions as to who could drive such improvements, who else would have roles; at which stages in the policy process; with the new work integrated and coordinated by whom; and with whose cooperation; and
- Whether there were any major alignments or differences in views among the five types of interviewee; reasons for similarities or variances; and the implications of differences for compromise, consensus, common ground and common good.

## **17.2 The need for ethical approaches to policy-making**

The first half of the research proposition suggested that the public policy system requires greater focus on the ethics of its outcomes, to foster just sustainability. Participants examined policy practices and impacts in terms of their ethical soundness; that is, their effectiveness in identifying and meeting genuine needs. Their responses have been clustered and summarised according to the first five overview questions.

*The suggestion that public policy needs a greater focus on ethics*

There was widespread agreement on the need for an explicit moral and ethical basis to policy-making, since ‘ethics are not talked about often in policy circles.’ While policy decisions are driven by ethics and norms of some sort, these are assumed, rather than being expressed, acknowledged



and adhered to. Some participants alluded to ‘a lack of moral courage in policy-making,’ while others commented that ‘whether the resulting policy is ethically robust, or not, depends on one’s point of view.’ Policies and their impacts should comply with norms of social morality, defined as a set of norms reinforced by social consensus. Societal agreement on an ethical framework should emerge from extensive public debate, to reduce the risk of it being ‘framed solely by the views of individuals’ and to ‘find what unites us, rather than what divides us.’

Political expediency and crisis management, rather than ethics, were seen as the drivers for decisions. Participants thought ministers hear what officials think they want to hear, since ‘alternative views are dismissed harshly.’ A gulf existed between ‘doing well’ in an accountability sense, and ‘doing good’ socially and environmentally. Ethical imperatives are devalued when policy actors advance their personal interests ahead of the common good. Descriptions such as ‘naked pragmatism,’ ‘cut-throat processes’ and ‘a ragged approach to ethics’ illustrated widespread concern that the ethics of policy outcomes are well down the scale of what really matters to influential policy and services actors. A senior policy manager reflected that: ‘We are reaping the consequences of poor ethical choices in all areas of our lives and our governance and policy systems reflect that.’

While some respondents assessed the likelihood of increased attention to ethics in policy-making as ‘minimal,’ because of ‘an absence of moral anchors in society at large,’ others thought that ethical principles could form government goals, to which the state agencies could align their own work. It was suggested that ‘the moral responsibilities of policy analysts and decision-makers could form a policy code of ethics,’ to recognise the ethical consequences of policy decisions. Then all would know what the standards were and compliance would be more transparent. In a ‘just-in-time’ policy culture, though, policy officials would have to be convinced of the value of such an approach for serving the government of the day.

A significant set of insights was generated regarding ethical success factors for public policy. As two strategic advisors pointed out, for effective power-sharing the policy process ‘should involve affected parties who have thought about a proposed new policy.’ There should be full analysis of its likely impacts. Sustainable buy-in should be sought among all stakeholders. Safeguards against adverse impacts should be integral to policy and service design and ‘new policies should engender hope among those affected for supportive outcomes.’ These elements create a viable prescription for ethics-based policy development.

*Social justice, environmental justice, just sustainability and social morality*

The respondents demonstrated common understandings as to the nature and ethical implications of social justice and, to a lesser extent, environmental justice. ‘Principles such as human dignity and justice are givens. The key issue is how they are applied in practice.’ Social morality was seen as a generic framework to guide attitudes and behaviours, but it requires public debate ‘to clarify and agree on norms that all of us can live with.’ Just sustainability was unfamiliar to most respondents as an integrated concept, although sustainable development featured in their thinking.

According to all of the participants, social justice meant that everyone has adequate food, clothing, decent accommodation, access to education and healthcare and opportunities to work for a fair wage, to provide for one’s family. Social justice was often portrayed as the fair distribution of benefits and burdens in communities. All citizens would be able to acquire capacity for accessing opportunities on an equal basis. Participants felt that it is government’s role to ensure that opportunities are in fact equal, since ‘this type of equality will lead to better, though not the same, outcomes for all.’

Government should ‘help people to achieve their highest potential, interdependently.’ Public servants felt that their personal convictions about social justice could not always be realised, because of ‘an absence in our organisations of an explicit ethical grounding for decision-making.’ They wanted this to change. As an analyst observed, officials must recognise that ‘everyone is worthy and no one should be overlooked. We each have a role to fulfil in society.’

The current gap between rich and poor was universally regarded as being unjust and ethically untenable and ‘we should start from what would make a difference for disadvantaged people.’ Respondents thought that without common commitment to a society that was just in its allocation of benefits and burdens, ‘social norms would unravel under the burden of socio-economic disparity.’ Government should help our community define its social values and aspirations. It should implement structures and policies to reflect agreed values that are morally sound. As an analyst commented, ‘there are ethical issues in getting the processes right, to increase the likelihood of justice and sustainability.’

Some participants expressed concern that government habitually denied the existence of poverty, because of the cost of eliminating it. Social morality needed to be translated into government action. Each policy should be assessed according to who would benefit from it; who would pay for it; which policy tools would work best and for whom; what its impacts would be on the most vulnerable people; and what help there is for those in need but not assisted by the specific policy under development.

A key ethical and practical issue for the participants was the selection of policy options in terms of social, economic, cultural and environmental justice and sustainability. Most felt that insufficient weight was given during the policy-making process to finding a morally acceptable balance between

economic growth and its ecological consequences. As Margaret Crozier, Rose Leonard, Mary Betz and David Tutty emphasised, social justice is meaningless if sought and attained at a cost to the environment. All four dimensions of sustainability must be managed within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem, irrespective of the perspectives of government and its advisors, since ‘we are all responsible for reducing our impacts on the environment.’ Case-by-case policy judgement was seen by interviewees as deficient in its attention to the impacts of policy trade-offs. The concept of ‘enough’ was cited as an expression we need to hear more often, regarding consumption, since ‘our future will be determined by the values we hold as a country.’

*Just sustainability as a manifestation of social morality*

For this research project and its participants, the concept of ‘social morality’ encompassed renewed societal interest in spirituality; a search for ‘moral anchors’ to redress social dysfunction; and a need to balance individual and collective interests justly. ‘Just sustainability’ included capacity for social participation as a sentient part of creation. As an economic policy adviser observed, ‘we all have capacity to contribute to the lives of other people.’

Manifestations of social morality, identified by the participants, included the need for common understanding of what is fair and decent; concern for the well-being of all; equitable wealth distribution; the social responsibilities of private wealth; equal access to decent housing and quality employment; and support for families in a low-waged economy. Most participants suggested that policy, social services and community interfaces needed improvement. The relationships between housing, health, education and employment were emphasised, with jobs and housing seen as integral to the achievement of other outcomes, ‘within the larger frame of sustainability for the planet.’

### *Present-day injustice in housing and employment*

With regard to housing policy and services, the main issues identified for social morality and just sustainability were unaffordability; overcrowding; poor quality houses; transience and disruption to children's education. There were calls for more government involvement in housing supply (Elaine Lolesio) and pleas for direct state assistance for home ownership (Alan Johnson, Madhavan Raman).

Current policies were rated reasonable, but tentative, inadequately resourced and framed by risk aversion. Most of us are able to provide decent housing for our families, but policies should cater efficiently, effectively and justly for those needing help to do so. Homelessness and pressures on emergency housing; waiting lists for state rental properties; and declining home ownership rates all suggested policy gaps and mismatches. As Alan Johnson stressed, 'government is abrogating its leadership role by treating housing as a residual policy.'

Given the visible impacts of new housing subdivisions on urban form, on water catchments and on the wider environment, sustainable housing design, energy efficiency and use of local materials were important to some participants, including Rose Leonard, Megan Courtney and Blair Badcock. They expected government to take the lead in such matters when managing its own housing portfolio. As the interviewees considered new housing policy imperatives, however, social concern outweighed that for the environment.

In employment policy, the issues included officials' lack of empathy with genuine need, blaming people for their own misfortune; and a desire to call government to account on poverty. Participants commented on low wages and welfare benefits; the necessity for low-income people to work two or three jobs to make ends meet (Mary Kayes); an absence of localised strategies for job creation (Margaret Crozier); and poor quality employment experiences through pressure to take any available job and relinquish the unemployment benefit (Jan Francis).

Interviewees identified a need for sustainable regional job creation and for more state investment to up-skill the workforce. Many were adamant that degradation of the natural environment was due to human activity benefiting only the wealthy and powerful. As in housing, social concern dominated the thinking of most respondents. There were suggestions that ecological carrying capacity should drive policy decision-making (Mary Betz) and acknowledgments that political and economic pragmatism actually does so (David Tutty).

Human dignity was linked to the right and responsibility of all to make their own decisions, rather than being forced into unsuitable jobs or inadequate houses. Participants described government's normative role as the creator of an economic framework that provides for sustainable employment, and as an active partner in the provision of sufficient housing to meet diverse needs.

Responses to the question of full employment reflected policy ambiguity caused by this country's vulnerability to global economic trends affecting its businesses and labour market. The interviewees wanted policy settings where 'all who can work, and wish to, can have a good job and where affordable and appropriate housing is readily accessible to everyone.'

*The positive systemic core that can be built upon*

Several elements were identified in the policy system which constituted a 'positive core' in the AI sense. These related to the commitment and good will of people providing social services (Pauline Kingi); the magnitude of resources invested in social policies such as housing and employment (Rose Leonard); and the range of policy tools at the disposal of government and its agencies (Greg Mossong).

Government's own contribution to the positive core depended on the type of administration in power. The Labour-led government (1999-2008) relied on an interventionist role to address market-driven inequality (Chris Carter), while the National Party's orientation (reflected in government post-2008) assumed that people would overcome adversity through their own efforts, with a targeted government safety net if need be (John Key). Both approaches generated energy for change, but the nature of the desired change and its attainment differed from one orientation to the other. All the interviewed politicians had come to Parliament wanting to 'do good' and therein lay their own contributions to the positive core.

Research participants operating in and close to government were adamant that public servants also work with integrity and want to see their efforts translated into ethically sound outcomes for clients, since 'individuals do their best within a system that perpetuates injustice.' This view permeated the interviews with policy analysts and service managers, as they described their approaches to their work, its sources of job satisfaction and the results they hoped to achieve. It was evident that local managers, in common with NGOs, had the ideas and the energy to 'do good,' based on their proximity to community hardship. They emphasised access to equal opportunities.

Policy developers felt that just policy outcomes could be achieved through targeting of resources already available for social programmes, and through the effective use of policy instruments. Quadruple bottom-line analysis and its associated ethics had penetrated their thinking, as ‘sustainable development’ and ‘wellbeing’ imperatives gained acceptance in the policy arena. For this group, political pressures were best managed through being prepared – analysing and identifying options prior to problems arising in the portfolio, and then ‘being ready to present the government with viable choices,’ in timeframes which met its political preferences and constraints.

The use of evaluation has steadily increased (Blair Badcock), despite misgivings in some organisations and among community advocates about whose purposes it really serves (Wendy Reid). Respondents advised that most evaluation work has been summative, to identify from its results whether a programme should continue, be amended, or cease. Evaluations have been done for current programmes, to check on design assumptions and implementation. These experiences are part of the positive core which can be built upon to increase expertise in formative evaluation and impact analysis, which, as respondents agreed, would enhance earlier policy-making stages. Current *ex ante* evaluation work was described, however, as ‘small scale and achieved only with difficulty.’

#### *Ethical imperatives and avenues for remedying what does not work well*

While the AI prioritised systemic strengths, the findings on possibilities for improvement in the policy system constituted the most information gained. Knowledge of what is needed in policy-making and services, based on evidence of its unjust impacts, provided valuable cues for enhancement to just sustainability. The quality of governance and the impacts of political



influence mattered to some respondents. Others emphasised managerialism and what they saw as excessive control by government agencies, suggesting that the subsidiarity principle could be more effectively applied. In the view of regionally based public servants, central offices pay less attention to local input than they should, and ‘they hold on to lower-level functions better exercised locally.’ The prevalent view among interviewees was that broad policy criteria and major funding should be dealt with centrally, for national consistency and equity, but decisions of the next order down should be devolved to regional offices.

The dilemma of policy quality and requirements for speedy response to government’s demands embodied risks to just sustainability, in the views of most participants. There was concern that ‘we do not ask difficult questions about policy effectiveness’ because of insufficient time to consider the implications of what we might find. Difficult questions and adverse assessments were seen as ‘blowing holes in the government’s good news stories’ so they were routinely avoided.

A constant theme was the lack of time for full consideration of potential policy impacts, resulting in ‘arbitrary thinking, policy on the run and programmes that missed the mark.’ Then ‘programmes fail and government wonders why’ (Wendy Reid). The tradition of ‘free, frank and fearless’ policy advice had fallen prey to political expediency and the cynicism of ‘giving government what it wants to hear.’ Excessive risk aversion was recognised as being destructive of innovation and inimical to justice (Jan Francis, Margaret Crozier and Brian Donnelly).

Extensive criticism was aired regarding the propensity among state agencies to promulgate new strategies without funding. The assumption seemed to be that agencies would absorb costs, which they had been doing since the early 1990s without baseline funding additions. Participants described a tendency

for government to ‘put out the documents and hope someone will pick them up.’ This was seen as abrogation of leadership and/ or unwillingness to engage in partnerships. Core government responsibilities seemed to be transferred to local bodies and community groups, but without resources or capacity-building (Tony Mayow, Megan Courtney and Jan Francis).

The research participants wanted principled responses from government to each difficulty identified above. The following suggestions, (augmented in Appendix Five) represent the themes in their thinking and provide an outline for new approaches to governance and policy-making:

- Move away from defensiveness and patch protection in policy-making
- Courageously offer real policy options, rather than trying to second-guess what government wants
- Develop and resource some cross-cutting CEO accountabilities
- Appreciate when government does not need to be in charge
- Develop strategic thinking capacity and actively encourage innovation
- Show greater risk tolerance and receptivity to alternative viewpoints
- Bridge the gaps between strategy, policy and programmes
- Consult and listen actively as policies and programmes are developed
- As the policy theory is designed, consider its practical applications
- Be clear about the respective roles of government’s central and local offices
- Devolve decision-making to the lowest appropriate level, as close as possible to the people who are affected by it
- Reduce service fragmentation and confusion for clients about what is available, how to qualify for assistance and how to use it to achieve independence
- Treat clients with respect, empathy and courtesy, avoiding judgmental attitudes to the reasons for their needing state assistance
- Capitalise on the energy in the third sector through genuine partnerships for better policy, sharing resources and meeting local needs
- Remove adversarial controls in contracts with local organisations
- Leverage private resources through effective seeding with government funds

### **17.3 Locating Catholic Social Teaching potential for policy input**

The second half of the research proposition, namely that CST could contribute to an ethics-based analytical framework for policy development, looks towards the future. Participants were asked to consider the extent to which CST already contributes and its potential for new contributions. Responses are now gathered in terms of the remaining overview questions.

#### *CST as an ethical framework for public policy*

Insights ranged from assertions that CST is sufficiently understood in principle by key policy actors for its contribution to be recognised; through a sense that maybe it can provide useful input; to the occasional suggestion that while CST gives Catholics guidance to live morally sound lives, it has little relevance in policy-making and should remain in the private sphere. The CST principles had relevance to public policy but, to gain acceptance in secular settings, some respondents felt that they would need to be divorced from their ‘Catholic’ labels, because of presumptions of neutrality in policy-making and the long-standing separation between church and state.

Those who subscribed to the first set of views commented that the CST principles are relevant to the kinds of distributive issues that politicians have to address. The politicians knew that CST could underpin governance. The apolitical nature of the Church itself ensured political respect for its views. Organisations such as Caritas and Catholic social service NGOs were known to provide tangible evidence of CST in action. Selective use of CST could help with policy formulation and impact assessment, challenging unjust aspects of the capitalist economy. As Br Pat Lynch pointed out, ‘Its respectful, judicious and selective application has potential for moderating aspects of the capitalist economy and policy decisions.’

While the Catholic experts' preference (David Tutty, Terry Dibble) was that the principles be used in their entirety, it was inevitable that policy decision-makers would select what was useful to them (Lisa Beech). Some thought the integrated approach of CST was needed to counter risks of minimalist governance structures (Terry Dibble). Since politicians tend to be impatient with theory, proponents of CST should emphasise its applicability and effectiveness (Neil Darragh). Politicians want 'success stories' and officials want tools to generate them.

A second group of participants was ambivalent about the acceptability of CST as a formative influence on policy thinking, while acknowledging the principles themselves as valid expressions of 'right relationships' among people and with the natural ecosystem. For some, the value of CST would depend on actual delivery of improved outcomes for vulnerable people once it had been applied. These respondents were not resistant to CST, but wanted clarity about how its ideals, as 'one voice among many that could be invoked,' would ensure the redress of social and environmental injustice, given political demands and voters' expectations. They thought that the best way to establish whether CST could successfully be applied to specific policy processes would be to try it.

A third group of interviewees expressed concern as to how much CST could influence public policy, when its ideals were compared with the 'amoral and utilitarian ethics of western liberal capitalism.' Values of individualism trumped 'common good' approaches to resource distribution. CST carries 'challenging counter-cultural messages' (Archbishop Charles Balvo, Ruth Smithies, David Tutty) such as interdependence, solidarity and the 'social mortgage' on private property. In our society, meritocracy is valued above altruistic concern for the needs of all people (Neil Darragh) and taxation is widely regarded as fulfilling the need for social contribution.

Five people were unequivocal that religion belonged solely in the private domain and had ‘no place in public policy.’ This meant CST and similar perspectives from other faiths were irrelevant to government. While this was a minority view among the participants, several commented that its currency in the wider policy setting would not be surprising. It represents part of the challenge of applying CST to policy-making.

*Advancing just sustainability through re-thinking policies and services*

There was a strong sense among the participants that, as citizens and policy contributors in a wealthy country, ‘we should use our privilege with a sense of responsibility.’ This includes caring for those who are struggling to have a decent life, ensuring that government is called to account for its response to poverty and eliminating blame from policy-making and service provision. In developing policies, ‘the CST principles could be used to generate the right questions,’ in the view of a policy analyst.

The need was identified for balanced policy attention to all four aspects of sustainability and well-being. Several interviewees suggested that social, cultural and environmental indicators should always be used, in conjunction with economic ones, to assess our real progress towards just sustainability. It was affirmed that housing, employment and all other policies should be based on human need combined with sustainable use of renewable resources and the mitigation of damage to the ecosystem, based on ‘an ethic of care.’

A note of economic realism was introduced, as respondents observed that our aspirations for justice needed to be balanced by the country’s capacity to afford new social investment. As John Key emphasised, ‘we need to live

within our means.’ As the research proceeded, this insight gained traction during a major economic downturn. Its impacts underlined the need for justice in allocating resources through policies based on moral principles. Wealthy people could ride out its worst effects but the ability to do so was not available to poor families or disadvantaged people. It was incumbent on government, therefore, through its social and economic policy, to find ways to assist the latter group, with just sustainability as the goal.

*Where housing and employment policy change would be most beneficial*

In housing and employment, the need was identified for cross-party and cross-sectoral policy approaches, to ensure best public resource allocation in terms of just sustainability. Both of these policy domains were regarded as strategically important in terms of national development – too important, in fact, to be captured by sole-agency introspection, party ideology or short-term political expediency.

There was energy among the respondents for open-minded public debate about the role of government in home ownership, given its centrality to New Zealand society and its decline in recent decades. Several mentioned market failure and their expectation that government should take the lead, ‘as a catalyst though not a controller’ in alleviating its effects through policy-making and regulation. They wanted evidence that this duty was being met, but were ‘not convinced that policy analysts knew how to do this.’ For this reason, they wanted to see greater community input to the advisory and decision-making processes within our institutions.

Best use of the state rental housing portfolio was energetically discussed. There was some concern that the Social Allocation System was a misnomer, in that it ‘rationed access to state housing, rather than assisting all those in

need’ (Alan Johnson). Respondents felt government was acquiring too few homes, seeking political gain while ‘neglecting a maintenance backlog in the existing portfolio’ (Madhavan Raman). It was also suggested that, while more new homes were needed to deal with lengthy waiting lists, the right to lifelong state house tenure needed re-examination (Denise Wiki).

In the employment domain, the participants posed critical questions, such as: Why is employment-related supply: demand matching defective? Why does government not have sufficient labour market knowledge to plan properly? Why, despite NGO input and advocacy at cross-sectoral meetings, are there still gaps in policies and services? Why are good pilot programmes cancelled without evaluation of their usefulness? What commitment does government have to full employment? Interviewees wanted policy analysts to design more effective responses, in the light of their social impacts. Just sustainability in employment policy requires this.

Government’s engagement with local businesses was sought, through joint strategies to protect jobs, maintain fair rates of pay, stimulate job creation and ‘create training pathways to new job opportunities’ (Jan Francis, Mary Kayes). Most respondents favoured interventionist approaches, opining that small to medium-sized businesses need government assistance in times of downturn. This might take the form of provisional tax deferrals to enable them to retain staff, tax incentives to hire new staff, education and training subsidies, funding for work-based training and incentives to expand the company and its labour force (Rose Leonard). As a provider, employer and contractor, Government should generate and sustain employment through public infrastructure projects (Tony Mayow, Megan Courtney).

Rather than forcing people to ‘take any job,’ participants expected that officials working with unemployed people would carefully assess their clients’ preferences, aptitudes and skills, help them with a job search plan

and CV, provide job search skills training and recognise their innate dignity through genuine engagement with them. Third sector bodies are keen to be involved in this work. Ideally the case management work would be subject to evaluation of its worth to the clients, rather than assessment solely in terms of its impact on the unemployment benefit numbers.

In the housing and employment policy domains, increased orientation to sustainable outcomes was sought, to replace the current instrumental focus on short-term outputs and political success stories. This requires more attention to strategic goals such as quality and sufficiency of the state rental housing portfolio; housing affordability; access to home ownership; quality of employment; and economic viability of families through fair pay rates. Open-minded consultation with the third sector should unlock its potential for innovative input to new models of housing and job seeker assistance, with resources leveraged to greatest effect. Because such approaches would be new for many government organisations, formative evaluation of policy was viewed by participants as ‘a means for positive learning.’

*Who could drive change through developing new policies and services?*

Several community advocates and NGO representatives wanted government ‘to walk with them in their development, rather than dictating to them at a distance.’ This entails listening actively to their aspirations, analysing needs and helping them to identifying options, as well as capacity-building and resourcing their work. There were suggestions that if government accepted this, its input would be reciprocated through local expert input on difficult policy issues. Local knowledge, capability and good will have the potential to contribute to justly sustainable housing and employment outcomes. Government was ‘not expected to be the silver bullet to fix everything,’ but it must supplement individual, group and business effort.



Policy analysts need to talk directly with local people affected by social and economic policy, and their advocates, to understand the realities of hardship. Analysts based in Wellington (the majority of them) should liaise with their local offices to ensure sound policy recommendations, rather than operating remotely from the points of impact. They need to do this to overcome the innate distancing created by their backgrounds, organisational structures and work environments. If they take this on board and do it, knowing ‘when they are not in charge,’ policy quality will be enhanced.

With resourcing and support, participants suggested that communities can improve local people’s access to affordable housing and job opportunities. They ‘know what is available in their housing and labour markets’ and what might be developed from the resources and energies at hand, with some ‘well-targeted seed funding’ from government. Interviewees suggested that revolving funds for housing deposits and cooperative projects, funding for business development, vocational training programmes and stepping stones to home ownership could all be initiated locally (Brian Donnelly).

#### *Compromise, common ground, common good and consensus*

In reflecting on the research questions, the participants drew upon their diverse experiences, accountabilities and expertise. Since effective policy-making depends on a mandate for decisions on public resource distribution, the views of the respondents reflect the diversity one would expect to find in any public debate about key issues such as housing, employment, ethics in policy outcomes and what just sustainability means. It is worthwhile, therefore, to reflect on the responses supplied to key questions and to find areas of agreement or divergence among the five types of research participant.

Each of the five groups of respondents had distinctive interests in, and views about the two-pronged research proposition. Within the groups there were divergent perspectives, usually originating from personal experiences and/or political orientations, but the similarities outweighed the differences. The variances were greater among the interviewee types than within them.

The ten Catholic experts focused on social morality and what they saw as poor standards affecting vulnerable people and the environment. For them, this decline was evident in the absence of an ethical orientation to policy-making. Their conception of social justice focused on poor people's access to decent housing, quality jobs, fair wages and working conditions that supported family cohesion. They felt that CST advocacy to government through Caritas sensitises politicians to the moral issues in social and economic policy, but that there is a gulf between respectful listening to the CST position and acting upon it. Some thought that 'politicians do try to act ethically but the system impedes their efforts.'

Catholic experts expressed hope that CST could influence decision-making for the better in the moral sense. They realised it would need application to policy issues, followed up by persuasive reasoning as to its benefits to society as a whole and to the outcomes sought by government itself. As Sister Mary Foy and Elaine Lolesio indicated, their views were influenced by hope and trust in the good will of politicians and senior officials to exercise their responsibilities in support of the common good.

Influenced strongly by their work with disadvantaged communities, the seven NGO representatives and community consultants were vocal about social and environmental injustice. Jan Francis, Tony Mayow and Wendy Reid felt, for example, that if government took an ethical approach to

ameliorating hardship and distributing societal benefits, it would pay more attention to local community development as a source of job creation and sustainability. They were critical of centralised, managerialist stances, which they thought were entrenched in government and operated to the detriment of community well-being and trust in our public institutions.

NGO representatives were generally cynical about government's ability and willingness to follow up its words with actions. They were emphatic that ethics does not currently feature in policy thinking but is just taken for granted. Most believed that 'government failed to mobilise community energy and local knowledge.' This caused some local groups to become dispirited and social policy resources to be poorly targeted.

The community consultants and NGOs had adopted sustainability as their strategy. Their conception of sustainability already embodied justice, so 'just sustainability' had meaning for them. Their advocacy work caused them to be the most visionary of any of the five interview groups as to how just sustainability might be achieved.

The ten policy analysts and managers took an institutional approach to the political requirements and economic realities manifest in their world. As responsible public servants, they did their best to contribute to government goals, accepting the political demands and timing limitations on the quality of their work. Some expressed frustration at the 'lack of opportunity for early debate' on the ethics of policy proposals, attributing it to timing pressures and institutionalised risk aversion. Such debate often occurred informally, but energy was apparent within this group for making ethical concerns explicit when policy options and impacts were being considered.

The policy managers were not hopeful, however, that systemic emphasis on political expediency and short-term concrete evidence would change any time soon. They were concerned that policy recommendations contrary to known government stances could be disadvantageous to them personally; 'that they would not last long' if they offered controversial views. Three of them doubted that faith-based principles had any place in policy debate, citing the separation of church and state as immutable.

The five government agency service delivery managers demonstrated regional perspectives in their assessment of systemic effectiveness in meeting needs. Like the NGOs, their closeness to clients enables them to know what is needed locally, but resource limitations and national priorities both influence their capacity to respond. They did not believe ethics played a large part in policy-making at present.

Frustration was evident among regionally-based managers, caused by their distance from core decision making. They wanted to be listened to, with regional concerns given more weighting in policy debate. Criticism was directed at 'the system' itself. According to Madhavan Raman and Denise Wiki, social programmes for which they were responsible, such as state housing allocation, acted as motivators in their own work, since they are 'tools to help people better themselves.' Most enjoyed mutually respectful working relationships with NGOs and the effectiveness of these links was often endorsed by community-based interviewees such as Elaine Lolesio.

Of any interviewees, the six politicians were most convinced that their role in policy-making is already undertaken from an ethical starting point. All six respondent politicians had come to their roles wanting to improve the lot of society in some way. They were inevitably influenced by their attachment to party ideology, but from constituency work and community expectations, they also knew to engage people in decisions affecting their well-being. The

nature of their work gave them broader insight than that available to most policy analysts. Acceptability of their work among voters was seen by the politicians as important, insofar as it gave them the mandate to ‘do good’ through their chosen political avenues.

Apart from the Catholic experts, the politicians were most knowledgeable about the principles of CST. While they regarded CST as one of many valid views, they recognised its applicability to policy debate and commented that they had found Caritas submissions helpful in their Select Committee work. Because of greater exposure to it than the policy managers had experienced, they seemed more receptive than the latter to its potential application as a set of generic ideas, to inform or guide front-end policy thinking. The ideas themselves were more relevant for the politicians than the Catholic origin of them, with most placing them within New Zealand’s broader Christian tradition and identifying with them in that context.

A recurrent dilemma observed by all the participants was the diversity of views about ‘the good’ in pluralist societies, as it affected the validity of the research proposition. The fieldwork has identified opportunities to align the policy system towards just sustainability as an ethically sound outcome that could be shaped by the New Zealand community to ensure justice, equity and environmental wellbeing. The majority of participants’ responses have also suggested that ethical principles such as those espoused by CST have the potential to inform and guide policy analysts and decision-makers in their roles of channelling public resources to where they are most needed and will best sustain the common good.

For my research proposition to fulfil its potential, the elements of just sustainability would need to be agreed, as would the nature of the ‘common good’ related to New Zealand society. Good governance would demand the state’s leadership in facilitating societal understanding and agreement.

In the light of the above findings, I now suggest that the CST principles could be used to define standards for just sustainability and furnish signposts for developing policies that would foster it. From the AI responses captured in Chapters 11 and 12, it also appears feasible to develop new policy frameworks and processes using AI, to help policy analysts and their managers think about policy impacts. Such a focus would increase the likelihood of ethically sound recommendations being available when government needs them, as policy developers would have confidence to take principled and proactive stances rather than displaying fearful reactions to political demand. Ethical benefits of a CST/AI combined approach would include better alignment of policies and services with community needs and aspirations.

The above reflections on the participants' insights and their implications for just sustainability suggest that there is ethical compatibility between their visions for just sustainability and the principles of CST. From the foregoing strands of work, I now have the systemic ingredients of a new paradigm for ethical policy analysis and service design. I now know what needs to change; I can see how such change could be advanced; I know who would have to be convinced to do it; I know where in the policy system some ethics-based thinking could be implanted; and I know where the impacts would eventually be seen if we did this. Accordingly, Chapter 18 explores fully the links between CST and public policy, prior to the design in Chapter 19 of policy and service frameworks based on Catholic Social Teaching and Appreciative Inquiry.

## Chapter Eighteen

### Catholic Social Teaching, ethical aspirations and reality

Informed by the six strands of literature and theory canvassed earlier and the insights of the research participants, Chapter 18 is oriented towards the potential of CST to help resolve policy issues. It postulates and then responds to the question ‘What should government do?’ in the light of research findings on what is happening; what is good; what is not so good; what is possible; what is necessary; what contribution CST could make and what should happen to move us towards a more justly sustainable future.

The principles of CST are aligned in this chapter with the policy issues that emerged in the literature and fieldwork. Policy needs identified in terms of governance, service delivery, housing and employment are cross-referenced to the principles of CST. A key task in Chapter 18 is to translate papal teaching and pastoral middle axioms into policy and service realities in New Zealand, so that policy-makers can apply them to policy and governance. I will indicate where in the policy system changes could be made, how they might occur, to what effect and what challenges may be present.

I found that once the literature and fieldwork had been thoroughly mined for insight, I needed to anchor new policy-making ideas in the CST core. To do this, I returned to the Magisterium. Pope John Paul II’s *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) focuses on the analysis and impacts of power structures, the moral status of property and the human relationship with the environment. *Centesimus Annus* (1991) was a crucial source for CST-based new thinking on integrity in governance and services, as well as justice in the domains of housing and employment. Then in 2009, as this research neared its conclusion, it received added impetus through the publication of a new Social Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI 2009a).

‘Calling us to place the long-term common good of humanity ahead of greed and myopic self-interest’ (Massaro 2009b), the Pope contributes a deep understanding of just sustainability. He places its strands of equity, social justice, environmental justice, morality and ethics within a relational purpose, namely ‘charity in truth.’ He is not concerned with the specifics of political or economic theory, nor in the left/ right-wing arguments that swirl around CST when a social encyclical is published. His concerns encompass ‘inclusion-in-relation’ and ‘people-centred ethics.’ Public policy could do likewise, by aspiring to a ‘people-centred’ purpose that transcends politics.

In the interface of CST with public policy, there is a three-level hierarchy of application. The CST principles encapsulate the ultimate purposes for policy-making, corresponding to strategic intent. The middle axioms relate to policy objectives. Specific policies and programmes represent the means by which the objectives will be met, once the middle axioms are applied locally. Each CST principle is now revisited, with policy instances to illustrate its middle axioms and practical applications.

### **18.1 Society, environmental concerns and related CST principles**

The connection of the CST principles to the realities of policy-making is structured in the same way as the foregoing exposition of CST in Chapters 3 and 4. The first set of applications concern the principles relating to the sites where policy impacts are felt, namely society and the environment. The same eight principles are involved here. The second set of six principles canvasses, as before, the sites where solutions to difficulties must be sought, namely in the economy and the political setting, the sources of power and decision-making creating the impacts on people and the earth.



*Human dignity, authentic development and public policy*

CST holds that all people have innate dignity and the right to authentic development, by virtue of being human moral agents. This dignity is non-negotiable. It cannot be traded off by condoning policy which undermines it. *Centesimus Annus* emphasises the ‘transcendent dignity of each person and the social nature of all human beings’ (CA 1991:46). People are not dependent on government, nor are they policy objects or economic units. Government goals should endorse our fundamental moral values and norms, to produce policy which, like CST, ‘assembles into a unity the fragments in which [truth] is often found and mediates it within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of peoples and nations’ (CIV 2009:9).

From Chapter 3, we may recall that Hollenbach (1979:204) articulated a set of relative priorities that have stood the test of time and should be reflected in social and economic policy. In the light of the principle of human dignity, associated with the other CST principles, he asserted that:

The needs of the poor are more important than the wants of the rich; the freedom of the dominated is more important than the liberty of the powerful; and enabling marginalised groups to participate is more important than retaining a system which excludes them.

If these priorities are respected in policy-making, human dignity is likely to be protected and enhanced. Thirty years later, in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), the Pope emphasises these same priorities.

### *How public policy should support the role of the family*

CST asserts that the family is the foundation of society, manifesting right relationships in society and autonomy relative to government. It follows that public policy should support the family unit in its purpose of nurturing and guiding children. Policy proposals should be subject to evaluation in terms of their ability to assist where needed, without interference. Most families can, and prefer to, function independently of the state, but some require help periodically, especially where children's well-being is at issue.

Because of market and policy failures and despite the social welfare system, many families lack the means for a fulfilling life. Entrenched disadvantage and poverty of spirit are evident in many families – the cumulative effect of years of inability to meet their own and society's normal expectations. The New Zealand Catholic bishops state that politicians should be called to account on their efforts to address economic hardship experienced by those on social welfare benefits and low wages (NZCCB 2008b). While paid work is valued in CST, its 'family' principle asserts that primary caregivers should not be forced to seek paid employment.

Along with employment and income support, housing is an area of social policy critical for family wellbeing and stability. It is often asserted in social policy circles that if housing policy fails, it is unlikely that other social policy will succeed in facilitating positive outcomes for needy people (Roberts 1988:151). Immediate assistance is needed for low-income families spending more than 50% of their income on rent or mortgage payments. Whether government acts directly or indirectly to provide sufficient affordable housing of acceptable quality, does not matter as far as CST is concerned. What does matter is that affordable housing be accessible to families to enable them to fulfil their role as the foundation of society.

*Normative policy contributions to the common good and solidarity*

In CST, the common good comprises all the social, environmental and economic conditions that enable people to reach their highest potential, as individuals and in collective solidarity. As *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971:46) indicates, the purpose of government is to ‘create effectively and for the wellbeing of all, the conditions required for attaining humanity’s true and complete good.’

A commitment to underpin the common good, through policy-making rather than responding to political expediency and interest-group pressure, requires new policy assumptions and norms. Government should raise the quality of public debate about what is just, sustainable and achievable. Application of the CST principles of the common good and solidarity demands new political and societal understandings about how to balance conflicting claims on public resources. Large tax cuts, for example, have the potential to restrict government’s ability to fund social services adequately.

Government should reflect on whether the common good is served by its housing and employment policies. Applied CST would require government to avoid policies and legislation that give individuals free choice at the expense of the common good. Examples for reflection include prolonged state rental occupancy when it is no longer needed; excessive production and working hours to chase more and more profits; wealth transfers related to investment housing that benefit the generation currently holding political power and economic resources, and disadvantage others, in particular young families trying to achieve stable and affordable housing.

*Policy-making to endorse freedom, rights and responsibilities*

Public policy should enable all to develop skills, acquire property and foster the common good, recognising that rights carry responsibilities. As the Pope teaches in *Centesimus Annus* (1991:48), economic policy assumes ‘guarantees of individual freedom.’ It is not government’s role to control people and make everyone the same, as occurs in extreme forms of collective socialism. Its job is to create an economy that ‘sustains business activities,’ enabling ‘those who work and produce [to] enjoy the fruits of their labours [and] feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly’ (ibid). Pope Benedict emphasises self-reliant contribution through ‘the logic of gift,’ where ‘sharing of reciprocal duties is a more powerful incentive to action than the mere assertion of rights’ (CIV 2009: 36, 43).

Social and economic policy needs to ensure that all can provide for themselves, free of poverty traps and independently of social welfare. It was suggested by participants that current policies extend welfare provision well into the middle class. This means that ‘dependency causes the working poor to become beggars and behave as such, looking for handouts rather than achieving self-reliance’ (Alan Johnson). Middle class capture of scarce public resources is effectively an ‘option for the somewhat rich,’ inherently incompatible with CST, especially with the preferential option for the poor.

In employment policy, there is a need for capacity-building programmes oriented towards self-sufficiency. These programmes should be designed and delivered to acknowledge clients’ innate dignity, while protecting their freedom and enabling them to meet their responsibilities to their families and communities. Low-income families should also be assisted with housing, to provide foundations for all their members to thrive. These requirements in justice and in CST have implications for resourcing the government’s housing and job-seeker assistance programmes.

### *The relationship between policies, services and social justice*

The wide-ranging applicability of the social justice principle illustrates the integrated nature of CST itself. Reflection on social justice picks up themes of human dignity, rights and responsibilities, interdependence and solidarity, the centrality of work in human development and the option for the poor. Social justice is the glue that holds CST together. In New Zealand, the *Social Justice Statement*, put out by the bishops of the Christian churches in 1993, drew heavily on CST in its portrayal of social justice as fairness:

... In our dealings with other people; in the way responsibilities are shared; in the distribution of income, wealth and power in our society; in the social, economic and political structures we have created; and in the operation of these structures so that they enable all citizens to be active and productive participants in the life of society (Smithies and Wilson (eds.) 1993; NZCCSS 2009e).

As Cardinal Williams (1991:110) points out, in order to comply with the CST social justice principle, we need 'policies that subordinate the rights of property or commerce to the needs of people to food, clothing, shelter, employment and health care.' Furthermore, 'profit should be subordinate to social, cultural and spiritual needs' (ibid). To address the concerns of CST about structures which marginalise people and create poverty, we need just structures. The first step is for policy analysts to realise which structures are unjust and why. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:36, 40) provides insight to assist identification of 'structures of sin.' Some political and economic assumptions and all policy choices that perpetuate the gap between rich and poor people are instances of unjust social structures.

CST supports the use of taxation as a redistributive power of government to increase social justice. As beneficiaries are among the most vulnerable to policy impacts, changes to welfare benefit entitlements or amounts should not put them further at risk. Policies should be designed to ensure means-tested beneficiaries do not fall into poverty traps. The research fieldwork made it clear that government needs to ensure beneficiaries know their entitlements. Many rely on advocates to help them navigate the complex policy labyrinth, which is disempowering and should not be necessary.

### *Public policy and the preferential option for the poor*

The ‘preferential option for the poor’ is a Catholic expression that gained prominence through the work of the liberation theologians (CELAM 1968, 1979; Mich 1998:265-73; West 1999:131; Hebblethwaite 1999:196). It has biblical origins, capturing the idea that those who have wealth are morally obliged to share it with those who do not. Poverty in wealthy nations such as ours is described by the New Zealand Catholic bishops as the ‘public face of a moral crisis’ (NZCCB 2006b). Greed and consumerism are identified by the Pope (SRS 1987:28, 36) as having contributed to this crisis. The remedy is solidarity, with the needs of poor people as the social policy priority.

The pervasiveness of poverty implies that it is acceptable for people to live in poverty. The preferential option for the poor requires policy settings which stress that poverty is not ethically tenable. Rather than denying the existence of poverty, government should actively alleviate it, with direct intervention to redress market failures that have caused social hardship and denied many people the essentials for a dignified life. The social policy document *Pockets of Significant Hardship and Poverty* (MSD 2007c) was an acknowledgment by government that poverty affects several parts of our community, despite the introduction of *Working for Families* in 2004. This report also provides cues for poverty remediation.

While social justice is often seen as fairness (i.e. everyone having the necessities for living), the preferential option for the poor claims that policy measures should actively benefit the poorest (by offsetting disadvantages that have affected them for a long time). In New Zealand, disparities relative to the community at large exist among Maori, Pacific people, single-parent families, low-paid workers, disabled people, refugees and homeless people. CST offers a useful framework for interrogating policy impacts in terms of government's ensuring such groups have access to health care, education, housing and the ability to earn income.

High employment figures between 2004 and 2007 did not translate into better living standards for welfare beneficiaries. This causes CST advocates to query what policy-making should do to redress this. To protect the dignity of people in need, government should make it less degrading for them to access welfare services. This means simplifying the processes and humanising the client relationships. Several fieldwork replies suggested that some officials reputedly make poor people feel like second-class citizens, treated disrespectfully and ill-informed of their full entitlements. In CST terms, this challenges government's commitment to justice.

Responses to conflicting claims for housing assistance should acknowledge the preferential option for the poor. Beech (2008) points out that 'housing is an invisible area of need. Overcrowding, dampness and poor insulation are rarely visible from the outside of New Zealand houses.' The AS subsidises families in sub-standard dwellings which affect family health and create insecurity and transience. The impacts of this are felt by poor families who are unable to access state housing. This illustrates the moral need to exercise the preferential option for all poor families, by supplying more emergency housing for homeless families and by increasing social housing supply, in

diverse forms and from diverse sources, including partnerships between government and the third sector.

#### *How policies and services should support cultural autonomy*

An important aspect of our humanity, recognised in CST, is our cultural heritage. Social justice and equality do not support uniformity in policy and servicing approach. While many policies and programmes are designed in a ‘one size fits all’ mode, this often produces service that is culturally inappropriate. The CST principle of respect for culture demands tailoring of services to cultural contexts. Differential policy outcomes, despite overall economic growth, invite queries about government’s commitment to social and economic justice for indigenous people and other ethnic minorities.

Government has a responsibility to enable indigenous people and immigrant communities to find suitable housing and engage effectively in job search activities. From the presence of culturally distinctive family structures has emerged the need for housing types that reflect the diverse requirements of the families who will live there. This is relevant to state housing design. As far as CST is concerned, structural inequalities creating disparities among groups should be addressed through tailored programmes and where needed, affirmative action policies. This is not ‘race-based’ policy for its own sake, but recognition that some ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by socio-economic disadvantage due to market and policy failures.

#### *A policy focus on environmental stewardship for sustainability*

CST views environmental damage as a spiritual crisis caused by economic decisions. For Pope Benedict XVI (2005a) the expansion of ‘external



deserts’ is a manifestation of ‘internal deserts,’ or widespread spiritual poverty. Several CST principles relate to environmental justice. The most obvious is ‘stewardship of creation,’ but CST notions of solidarity, the common good and the universal destination of goods are also relevant to consumer pressure on the environment on the part of wealthy societies, which have ‘exploited creation out of a desire to have absolute domination over it’ (Pope Benedict XVI 2010:6).

With regard to environmental policy, CST focuses on the right relationship between humanity and the earth. Development should incorporate respect for nature because human dominion over the physical world is not morally absolute. We are obliged to use it ‘to satisfy our legitimate needs ... while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation’ (*CIV* 2009a:48). This view reflects Catholic ideas about self-sacrifice – giving up some goods and comforts so that others in the world might have what they need to survive and nature might retain its capacity for renewal (*CA* 1991:37, 40; also see Pope Benedict XVI 2010:5). Good governance demands examination of how current policy reflects our duty towards future generations regarding the use of the earth and its resources. We need to integrate environmental policy into strategic thinking, rather than treating it as something apart.

An effective cross-sectoral approach would ensure that environmental protection is not compromised by the needs of workers for stable jobs and communities for new housing, or vice versa. The CST ‘responsible stewardship’ principle demands that in policy-making we find a just balance among conflicting claims. As the United States Bishops observe, ‘The overarching goal is to achieve during the twenty-first century a just and sustainable world, through ... moral responsibility on the part of individuals, voluntary organisations, governments and trans-national agencies’ (USCCB 1991:16). Public policy has a critical role in shaping this new world.

## 18.2 The political economy and related CST principles

The second group of suggested new norms for policy-making canvasses the six CST principles which have a direct bearing on the political economy, as the setting for policy-making and the arena in which solutions to the demands of just sustainability will be found.

### *The relationship between economic policy and economic justice*

Capitalism works reasonably well for those who have the capacity to work, afford decent shelter, pay their way and support their families. It does not work for those who lack resources, abilities and opportunities to do this. Looking at those who are not viable in the labour market, for example, there are reasons which are within their control to change and reasons which are outside their control. Where people can effect change, they may need some help to do so – in the form of capacity-building, training or business seed funding. If circumstances are beyond their control, they need responsive government assistance. Government itself needs effective tools to analyse the root causes of welfare dependency in a non-judgmental way, and to find the best solutions for its remediation. As Vallely (1998:151) comments, ‘Some goods ... ought to be distributed according to ethical rather than economic criteria ... on the basis of need, rather than the ability to pay.’

In relating economic policy to economic justice from a CST perspective, we might ask whether the state fulfils its proper role in the economic sector. *Centesimus Annus* states that government should guarantee economic security and rights; create conditions for job growth; support business activities which create jobs and intervene when monopolies impede sustainable development and fair resource distribution (CA 1991:15, 48). In the light of global recession, *Caritas in Veritate* calls for a review of the

powers of governments, to enable them, through new forms of engagement with others, to address the challenges of today's world (CIV 2009:24-5).

Such papal guidance means that the benefits of economic growth should be shared by all. The moral imperative for economic policy-making is the just application of the range of policy tools available. Combinations of taxes, user charges, tax credits, as well as loans, subsidies and transfers should join with legislation, regulation, information provision and education to produce justly sustainable outcomes. Impact analysis from a CST perspective could help with policy design along such lines.

*Policies to endorse the universal destination of created goods*

In CST terms, the proper use of wealth is to ensure that it is fairly shared and that all needs are addressed. Because earthly goods were created for everyone, public policy should advance the poorest members of society, to benefit the whole community. Rapid economic growth is environmentally unsustainable, so we should produce less and share what we have more fairly, applying a 'social mortgage' on private property, as taught in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987:42). The realism of this approach in our acquisitive and competitive society is, however, a matter for conjecture.

The CST 'universal destination' principle can be applied to housing policy, with its objective of decent housing for all New Zealand families. The notion of shelter has links with the CST principles of human dignity, social justice, the family as the foundation of society, human rights and reciprocal responsibilities. The housing suitability idea picks up CST principles related to cultural autonomy, the role of government, the common good, social and distributive justice, subsidiarity and the complementary roles of government and the third sector. Home ownership has links to CST views on private

property rights, social participation and authentic development. Because housing fulfils so many human needs, the CST norm for housing policy involves universal access to decent, affordable, suitable housing, with no homelessness. Housing policy should be designed accordingly. Anything less means that human dignity and social wellbeing are compromised.

Our cultural norms regarding housing as an investment and motivation to 'trade up' by changing our place of residence mean that, in our society, housing is usually considered a private good and a tradable commodity. The CST position is that it is a public good, carrying social obligations which are not tradable. For CST, housing policy should affirm people's right to acquire property and benefit from what they have worked for, while making sure that others are not disadvantaged.

CST could interrogate housing policy related to home ownership. In New Zealand, the 'universal destination of created goods' implies unimpeded occupation of a family home. Its ownership might be attained through deposit-gap assistance, capitalisation of Working for Families entitlements, deferred payments on land, joint ventures with third sector social housing developers, equity sharing and subsidised mortgages with a maximum debt servicing ratio of 30% of gross household income. We have had successful programmes along these lines in the past. Government could provide research funding for affordable, sustainable housing design, perhaps within business incubators for innovative fledgling design consultancies.

#### *Policies and services to underpin the dignity of work*

CST emphasises that workers' rights matter more than safeguarding capital and generating profits. Respect for people's dignity means they should not be denigrated as 'stock and flow' commodities in labour market analysis.

CST has norms for employment policy. These concern job quality and sustainability; access to suitable, fairly paid jobs; career paths; training and development opportunities; helpful job-seeker services and sufficient income support if people are unemployed. Government should aim for full employment or as close to it as proves practicable (*LE* 1981:18; USCCB 1986:65-9; NZCCB 1998a:2-3; *CIV* 2009:25, 63).

As Social Encyclicals and Bishops' Conferences have stated, unemployment is not just a by-product of economic restructuring (NZCCB 1998a). Since unemployment to limit wage rates and inflation is not morally tenable, CST repudiates structural unemployment. People are not surplus, even if jobs become so. Government has an ethical responsibility for implementing policies that smooth out the worst effects of market failure, with policies that compensate for their impacts on people (*CA* 1991:48; *CIV* 2009:35).

Since it holds that people are the subject of work and not its object (*LE* 1981:6-7) CST emphasises a living wage, not a minimum wage. CST makes ethical links between a living wage, social justice and authentic human development. It is not morally acceptable for firms or government to try to reduce unemployment by depressing wages below levels sufficient for decent standards of living.

Similarly, job-seeker beneficiaries should not be disadvantaged in their work engagement through benefit stand-downs, claw-backs or bureaucratic requirements for starting work. Government has to be realistic about policies that cut benefits and force people into the labour market if suitable jobs are not available. Employment policy quality would gain from new thinking and local collaborations, combined with the application of CST to imaginatively radical ideas for policy and service quality improvement.

### *Governance, subsidiarity and the normative role of government*

CST asserts that: ‘Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to ensure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life’ (USCCB 1996a:8). Government’s role is to develop policies based on interdependency, altruism, reciprocity, mutuality, solidarity and subsidiarity, to foster ‘secular morality’ (Vallely 1998:153). Pope Pius XI taught that government should not suppress smaller bodies through usurping their functions. It should help them if need be, but not control them (*QA* 1931:23). It needs to discharge those responsibilities for which it alone has the capacity, knowing when a local group can make its own decisions and giving it the space to do so (*CIV* 2009:57).

The research fieldwork suggested that government should pay a lot more attention to subsidiarity. Rather than pursuing a ‘we are in charge and we know best’ stance, government should generate opportunities for debate on the morality of its policy choices. There is considerable scope for local input to housing provision and to job-seeker assistance services, if government can shed its need to control and micro-manage. CST may be able to help with the design of alternative frameworks for accountability.

### *Fostering effective participation in civil and political processes*

New Zealand’s ecumenical *Social Justice Statement* (Smithies and Wilson (eds) 1993:18) asks policy-makers to assess whether their work ‘encourages a caring and interdependent society where community wellbeing is valued.’ This entails the participation of all in important decisions that affect them. Furthermore, *Centesimus Annus* (1991:48) stresses the ethical imperative for government to apply supplementation, which refers to the provision of help where it is genuinely needed, to facilitate everyone’s participation in civic

processes on their own terms. Policies and resource allocations should encourage citizens' participation in intermediate bodies, to strengthen the fabric of society so that the interests of the less powerful are represented justly and they feel empowered to contribute (*CIV* 2009:38-9, 41, 57).

*Rationale and norms for contributing to the global common good*

CST challenges government's actual commitment to our obligations as a wealthy nation to counter global poverty. There is a moral imperative to share resources with Pacific nations and other neighbours threatened by natural disasters and political instability, in the interests of international solidarity and the common good. As the Pope teaches, 'In an increasingly globalised society, the common good ... assume[s] the dimensions of the whole human family ... the community of peoples and nations' (*CIV* 2009:7).

To exercise global citizenship, we should contribute to the international agencies which ensure economic resources are used for the common good. Our trading approach should be to abolish barriers which serve only powerful interests and militate against the common good. We should endorse the redistribution of income and power from rich to poor nations. CST also demands we monitor government's commitment to environmental sustainability, along with its effectiveness in contributing to a global economic community which no longer relies for wealth generation and just sharing of it, on accelerating consumption of natural resources.

Principled global citizenship parallels our efforts domestically to create a more justly sustainable society. The CST focus on human interdependence suggests that we cannot isolate ourselves within New Zealand from socio-economic and environmental needs that are manifest further afield. For our

society to become justly sustainable, we must apply ethical standards to internal policies such as housing and employment, while developing relationships of solidarity with the global community.

### **18.3 Assessing CST potential as a public policy resource**

The foregoing research furnishes ample material for assessing the current profile and influence of CST and the extent to which its principles do, or could, permeate the policy system, as part of an ‘ethics arsenal’ fostering just sustainability. Concepts of dignity, responsibility, respect, equity, solidarity, altruism, justice and the common good all originated from the natural law and Christian ethics underpinning our cultural heritage, that is, ‘the law etched on human hearts’ (*CIV* 2009:59). This level of common understanding provides a starting point for using CST in policy formulation and service design.

Some aspects of CST are counter-cultural for us. Our egalitarianism supports equal opportunity, rather than any endorsement of ‘preferential options.’ We demand rational justification of any claim for, or right to, special treatment. Furthermore, our classical liberal tradition of private property means that the ‘social mortgage’ idea is alien to mainstream thinking. Voluntary charity is accepted, but any moral requirement to relinquish what we have worked for meets with resistance. Reciprocity and contract are more entrenched than spontaneous generosity or altruism.

Free-market competitiveness and acquisitiveness have generated a focus on individual needs, rights and entitlements, rather than an orientation towards collective well-being. Even when, in principle, we value solidarity with the poor, we insulate our personal property from the common pool, relying on tax contributions for our social responsibilities. In such circumstances, how



effectively can the principles of CST influence the dominant assumptions and practices in a policy system reflecting the chosen values of our society? The foregoing research has suggested avenues for its positive influence.

CST often comes across as vague, so its principles need to be applied with clear-cut simplicity to become compelling and persuasive. There is an emergent opportunity to link the CST principles and just sustainability, grounding these concepts in policy and client service applications within housing, employment, governance and service implementation. As with any ethical principles, policy analysts and service providers in government agencies need time to become ‘finely attuned to the requirements of the common good’ (CIV 2009:71) and then to engage in the complex thinking that CST application to policy proposals necessarily entails.

#### *Challenges for CST in a pluralist democracy*

From the literature and the insights of the research participants, it is clear that Catholic Social Teaching offers a way of approaching policy dilemmas that differs vastly from the familiar hegemonic processes and assumptions of neutrality, moral relativism and rationalism. In any proposal for change, we have to take care not to underestimate the size of the task involved in persuading people who are comfortably ensconced in a system to think and act differently. Resistance to change accompanied by power games is commonplace in the policy system, as vested interests jockey for influence and advantage in the allocation of resources to their preferred projects. Yet CST asks us to think afresh. It challenges many of the assumptions and values of our pluralist society. Its proponents are, in turn, challenged socially, politically and ethically by the prevailing secular norms.

To maintain credibility for the moral guidance role of CST, it is crucial for Church leaders to retain the dynamism of its core moral principles by reinterpreting, adapting, applying and refining them in the light of changing social and political circumstances. Many religious and cultural traditions are under threat in today's pluralist society, but fundamental human values remain. CST can help define and strengthen them 'if the world is ready to listen' (Vallely 1998:148).

Our society may be prepared to listen, if advocates for just sustainability, ethical transparency and adherence to principles such as those espoused by CST can build a constituency around these views. The key to doing so, as some research respondents noted, is to generate community stakeholder support by tapping into shared standards of decency and fairness, linking these standards to CST and communicating widely to shape public opinion and influence government decision-making. Caritas does this, for example, formally through Select Committee submissions and informally in its use of communications media. Other NGOs, academics, social service providers, conservationists and community groups are similarly capable of articulating core values, motives and ethical principles, mobilising support for them and contributing to the policy agenda through the diverse avenues which are available in our representative democracy.

Advocates of the CST principles need to express unambiguous messages for the actors in the public policy system and for other audiences in our pluralist society. The literature refers to, and some research participants mentioned, apparent incoherence in many CST messages. This may be caused by the papal Magisterium simultaneously addressing two different audiences in the interests of ecumenism – Catholics on the one hand and 'all men of good will' on the other. Inconsistencies may arise because the latter audience does not necessarily endorse the underpinning theology (Curran 2002:48; Hehir 1991:81). Because the social encyclicals and pastoral statements comment

on political and economic systems, the needs, values, interests and receptivity of everyone, not just Catholics, have to be considered.

A similar difficulty surfaces in the linking of CST with the secular policy environment. Pluralism entails divergent values and assumptions. Authors such as Curran, Coleman and Hehir suggest that CST has not addressed what Curran (2002:48) calls 'an unresolvable tension' between differing value systems and moral codes. As a number of my research respondents observed, the public policy issue is to find ethically tenable common ground as the foundation for policy development. The CST issue is the need to 'respond to pluralism, multiculturalism, ecumenism ... through persuasion rather than dogmatic statement' (Vallely 1998:135). Implementing CST-based policy thinking will thus entail lucid and persuasive communications with politicians and officials, in consultation with community stakeholders.

Another challenge for applying CST in our pluralist society is that there is general agreement on the 'what' of CST, but 'much dissent' regarding the 'how.' Johnson (1991:253) refers to 'a paradox of continuing disagreement about social objectives that all of us claim to find attractive and morally compelling.' In similar vein, and importantly for this research, Merkle (2001:253) insists on clarity about what differentiates CST from political theories, to counter any accusation that CST aligns itself with whatever political theory suits the Church's hierarchy at the time. Policy actors are intolerant of vague principles which allow for abdication from debate on how to apply them (Dorr 1992; Baum and Ellsberg 1989; Curran 2002). As my interviewees emphasised, if CST is to have credibility, it has to grapple with the same detailed concerns about public resources and trade-offs that policy analysts and politicians have to address.

Furthermore, in pluralist societies, CST has to demonstrate that it can be applied more widely than its traditional European settings (Dorr (1992;

Vallely 1998; Merkle (2001). Globalisation, pluralism and social mobility characterise the twenty-first century, resulting in the need to accommodate diverse and often conflicting values in our communities. Vallely (1998:156) comments that CST stands firmly against libertarianism, neo-liberalism, relativism and other trends which ‘deplete the moral culture,’ but notes the difficulty of identifying the common good in a pluralist society. Many of my respondents have expressed a similar concern.

Indeed, the CST principle of the common good provides fertile ground for disagreement in social science literature and in the public policy system. Novak (1991; 2001:2002:174) and Massaro (1998; 2000a), for example, represent opposite poles in the continuing debate about the respective rights of individuals and groups. Hollenbach (1979) has identified prolific ‘claims in conflict’ which surfaced as human rights legislation became widespread. MacIntyre (1988), Curran (2002:144) and others query how identifiable, relevant and meaningful the common good is in pluralist societies. Vallely (1998) and Massaro (2000a; 2010), on the other hand, assert its centrality to CST specifically and to high standards of social morality, so that pluralism is embraced and no one is excluded from economic and social engagement.

New Zealand society and its public policy system need what Rawls (1971) termed an ‘overlapping consensus’ between moral principles of distributive justice and political decisions (Massaro 1998:190). Such consensus would help our communities, government officials and politicians find common ground while recognising the valid plurality of views within our democracy. We need to achieve this while working with inherent conflicts in the policy system, such as antithetic social goals, budget constraints and differing preferences for policy instruments and programme types. CST can help to evaluate which strategies are most desirable morally, by articulating ‘a principle-based perspective beyond the power relationships that characterise the interest-group pluralism of modern liberal democratic society’ (Massaro 1998:xiii). Like Appreciative Inquiry, CST invites us all to think anew.

The ability of CST to influence political decisions and policy development processes depends on the extent to which its proponents understand power structures, identify the roles of the key actors within them and interact effectively with these people (Ellsberg 1989:xiii; Dorr 1992). The CST tradition identifies ‘moral demand on organisational structures’ (Hollenbach 1979:55) but does not always follow through on the implications of this demand – that abuses of power create injustice. In fact several critics, including Dorr (1991), Hollenbach (1979) and Massaro (1998) allude to a systemic tendency within CST to avoid conflict, in the hope that reason and harmony will mediate differences. The policy system needs a more incisive approach. CST needs to acknowledge the valid place of [respectful] conflict as a means to redress injustice, and stand firm more often (Curran 2002:89).

Hobgood (1991:246) suggests that ‘capitalism operates structurally according to a preferential option for the rich.’ The economic orientation of most government policy complicates matters for CST, with its preferential option for the poor and its focus on the human person as the subject of all endeavour. Nevertheless, CST practitioners need to avoid taking exclusive, idealistic or moralising stances. Demonstrated awareness of and engagement with current concerns in an analytically rigorous way are essential for CST to be taken seriously in policy environments.

#### *Towards new policy tools based on the CST principles*

The above research has elucidated housing and employment possibilities which could augment those dominant in the policy arena. Application of CST generates important ethical questions, at the conceptual level and pragmatically oriented to prevailing assumptions (Vallely 1998:160-3). Rather than focusing on policy cost-benefit analysis and political

pragmatism, CST invites us to consider important ethical questions involving challenges to policy norms.

Such questions are wide-ranging. Will new policy proposals foster respect for human dignity. Will they advance just sustainability? Will they generate active social participation? Will they enable individuals and local groups to meet their responsibilities and take ownership of decisions within their areas of concern and expertise? Will they alleviate poverty and hardship through ensuring all citizens have access to quality jobs and decent affordable housing? Will they improve the position of the poor? Will they sustain right relationships between humanity and the natural world?

The foregoing research has shown that policy analysts and decision-makers are unaccustomed to addressing the moral status of their recommendations and decisions. As far as the research participants and I know, there is nothing in the policy system that requires professional reflection on ethical issues such as those alluded to above – prior to, during or following the development and implementation of new policies, programmes and services. The research findings suggest that there should be.

Chapter 19, accordingly, offers three new policy tools, applicable at major stages of the policy-making and servicing continuum. The use of such tools, based on the CST principles and the AI methodology, would stimulate the ethical reflection which is currently absent from our policy processes. It is worth experimenting with them, firstly to find common *ground*, and then to identify the common *good*, with a view to just sustainability as the desired outcome for government policy and services.

## **Chapter Nineteen**

### **Catholic Social Teaching and new frameworks for policy-making**

This research has explored the relationships between the principles of CST and selected policy frameworks in New Zealand. It has drawn on papal teaching and pastoral middle axioms to inform the application of social ethics and morality in a world where there is homelessness, unemployment and environmental damage. In terms of its magisterial and pastoral brief, CST guidance stops there. We lose the full benefit of its insight as a consequence. While aspirational statements have their place, we now need to get closer to the action. Catholic community workers do so every day, as they alleviate the human impacts of policy and market failure and advocate for policy change in line with the principles of CST.

Foundations for practical application of ethical standards to policy-making have now been laid, in the foregoing literature and fieldwork. In Chapter 19, three policy-making frameworks are offered in conceptual and preliminary design form – relating to steps in the policy process.<sup>i</sup> They encompass (1) needs assessment (2) policy development; and (3) policy implementation and service delivery. These frameworks are informed by, and elaborate on, the CST/AI questions posed to research participants during the fieldwork, as we explored norms for housing, employment, governance and service delivery. As drivers for new ideas, they contain seeds for the development of impact evaluation and applied ethics training frameworks later on.

The proposed frameworks reach beyond the usual fieldwork interpretation which leads to research conclusions, but they are needed for addressing the second part of the original research proposition. Offering them at this point represents a challenge to widespread assumptions that CST is too vague to have practical relevance to public policy-making and service delivery.

## **19.1 CST-based social and environmental indicators of effectiveness**

As suggested by the above theory and fieldwork, each CST principle embodies indicators of moral effectiveness to assist with policy and service assessment. In the social and environmental areas, numerous performance indicators lend themselves to ethics-based discussion and measurement. Concepts explained earlier such as human dignity, subjectivity, respect, freedom and authentic development require consideration. Free will, conscience, rights, responsibilities and choices should all be acknowledged in policy and service design. By adding measures to these concepts, we can examine the propensity of policies to capitalise on strengths, acknowledging weaknesses but not emphasising them.

In similar vein, the CST notions of common good, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocity and mutuality can underwrite policy expectations, incentives and resource allocation. A perception of the family as the basis of society, for instance, generates assumptions and decisions about how this institution should be supported in the policy arena, through policies and services that reflect this view. While the nuclear family is the basis of CST, the policy system has to acknowledge societal changes to the definition and structure of the family, respecting human dignity and relationships.

The concept of social justice produces a raft of related indicators, including the fair distribution of wealth and power, of social and environmental benefits and burdens, and the extent to which policy settings ensure that the basic needs of all are met ahead of profit-taking. The preferential option for the poor suggests that policies should provide assistance for those who are most vulnerable in society, socio-economically or for any other reason.



Respectful treatment of all who access the policy system should mean that services acknowledge cultural autonomy and integrity. Newcomers to our society should be assisted to integrate without being culturally overwhelmed or assimilated. Government agencies should, furthermore, respect the role and expertise of local organisations operating as advocates and mediating bodies between citizens and government, and invoke their assistance where such interface is needed.

The environmental dimension of just sustainability involves the responsible stewardship of creation. This CST concept involves respect for the integrity of all creation and acknowledgment that human dominion over nature is not absolute. There are ethical constraints on decisions involving other forms of life, habitat damage and use of natural resources. Solidarity with current and future generations is fostered by sustainably balanced social, economic, cultural and environmental interests today. Impact analysis can be used to measure implementation of these four dimensions of sustainability and their effects on each other. CST endorses public policy that is compliant with sustainability, equity and environmental justice. There is no ethically sound reason to minimise these concerns. On the contrary, there are pressing reasons to focus on them.

## **19.2 CST-based economic and political indicators of effectiveness**

The above mentioned social and environmental elements of CST furnish raw material for ethically sound policy design and analytical tools. Similarly, the CST principles pertaining to the political economy can be disaggregated into supporting concepts that will serve as policy indicators of effectiveness. The key issue here is that entrenched policy-making assumptions and structures are incompatible with just sustainability, as is

seen in policy and market failure affecting some groups in society and the natural environment.

Since markets cannot deliver just sustainability, CST asserts the need for government to provide economic assistance through the state to those in need of it. Government should measurably ensure social and economic stability, implementing policies that stimulate job opportunities, ensure all are housed adequately and reduce the gaps between rich and poor people, since job scarcity, homelessness and vast disparities of wealth are unjust. CST holds that the needs of the poor should drive economic and social policy. Government should, therefore, deliver economic justice through equitable application of policy instruments such as taxes, transfer payments, loans, subsidies and user charges.

The CST principle related to the universal destination of created goods furnishes many indicators of policy and service effectiveness for inclusion in policy assessment tools. These include equitable access to community resources, including government funds. Given the varying abilities of people to provide fully for their own needs, the universal destination principle requires that the basic needs of all citizens for food, clothing, shelter, income, health care and education should be met.

CST holds that shelter is far more than a commodity, so decent housing should be available through people's efforts supplemented by government where necessary. Homelessness is a moral crisis, according to CST and should be alleviated to the greatest extent possible. CST recognises private property rights, but holds that they should not be exercised in ways that disadvantage other people. Economic policy has considerable influence on the extent to which justice is served, where the ability to make ends meet and accumulate wealth is concerned.

CST originated in papal concern for workers' rights relative to employers' expectations. Its focus on the dignity of work continues to ground its ethical principles. Key indicators for policy effectiveness concern the treatment of workers in the policy sense. Since no one is ever surplus, full employment should be the policy goal, even though it is not attainable absolutely. Government has a key role in stimulating the economy to create jobs. Its success in doing so can, and should, be measured.

Job-seekers should have government-funded access to good quality labour market and training advice. The services provided to unemployed welfare beneficiaries should be respectful and helpful, devoid of attitudes that blame them for their lack of work. Policies, programmes and official advice should ensure that people are aware of all their entitlements to assistance. They should be helped with career planning and job searching so that they can prepare for entry into the job market armed with reliable information on all the options available to them. Public servants should ensure that their work enables their clients to identify their own strengths, assess their options and make their own decisions as to the best courses of action, rather than being told what to do. In this way, their innate dignity is respected.

Through its principle of subsidiarity, CST asserts that government should not relieve people of their own responsibilities or take over functions which they are capable of fulfilling. Assignment of respective roles may need case-by-case decisions, but the principle is clear. CST does not provide specific governance models. Effectiveness indicators can include the extent to which government agencies work with local groups and businesses, and the nature of such interactions. Questions will always arise such as – who holds the power to make programme design, resourcing and participation decisions? Is the distribution of roles the best fit for the purpose? Whose interests are being served? Whose interests are neglected, by choice or inadvertently?

Community providers should not be micro-managed. Core government roles (see *Centesimus Annus* 1991:48) should not be abrogated to third sector bodies, but policies and programmes should facilitate working with them, to leverage resources and foster joint outcomes. Similarly, civic participation necessitates debate on economic choices, opportunities for participation in policy processes, consultation and official engagement with community concerns. Policy indicators can be designed to help with the assessment of CST thinking as regards particular programmes.

CST encompasses solidarity with all humanity and concern for the global environment. Its principle of global development and peace requires that we work towards just sustainability, reflecting our global interdependence. New Zealand has global obligations in terms of solidarity with poor people. Our contributions to Pacific peoples' wellbeing in their island communities, for example, demonstrate justice. In domestic policy, peace and development are enhanced through our attention to the needs of immigrant communities for housing, jobs and employment advice. Policy indicators can be applied in the housing and employment domains, to assess the effectiveness of our programmes in achieving justice from the peace and development angle.

The above comments illustrate the scope for CST to inform the development of policy assessment tools and benchmarks for evaluating effectiveness in our progress towards just sustainability. Allied to this potential for ethical enhancements in policy-making is an opportunity to use the strengths-based approach of AI. The three frameworks developed to ground this research (chosen because of their initiating functions from which tools for later policy-making stages can be derived) represent CST and AI in unique combination.

### 19.3 A triangulated approach to policy-making and services

In the course of the research design and subsequent fieldwork, it became apparent that, in addition to the need for greater consideration of ethics in policy design and service delivery, there was an opportunity to re-think the methodological assumptions underpinning policy development processes, to lessen the usual policy-making focus on deficits and problems. As my awareness of CST deepened, I recognised that AI shared with CST a ‘people-centred’ approach to identifying good in human systems, generating positive momentum from people’s own strengths and fostering hope for a more justly sustainable future (Cooperrider *et al* 2008; CIV 2009).

Accordingly I decided to incorporate AI methods in the design of CST-based frameworks for policy design, development and implementation. In the knowledge that the Catholic Church itself had successfully used AI in many parish-based developments (Ludema 2001; Paddock 2003), I could confidently have CST and AI permeate my new frameworks together.

#### *Challenges for the application of AI in real-world policy contexts*

Because of its location within a social constructionist paradigm emphasising contingency and emergent reality, Appreciative Inquiry poses challenges to the bureaucratic thought patterns and logical positivism which underpin the public policy process. The challenges are offered in reverse as well – why would policy actors be receptive to contingent developmental processes that embrace ambiguity and do not eliminate uncertainty? Are the constructionist methods and innovative energies of AI too risky for officials and politicians to countenance? After all, these people are accountable for efficient use of public resources and effective policy design and implementation. Yet how is

effectiveness defined in the long run? What kinds of policy interventions are most tenable ethically and why?

In applying AI to the policy cycle, we encounter challenging echoes of Hobgood's (1989; 1991) 'paradigms in conflict.' The policy system is hierarchical and AI is egalitarian. The policy system discourages speculation and imagination, requiring analysts to analyse facts and their tangible measurable evidence, while AI encourages visionary thinking. The public service is not used to explorations of 'what if' or 'what might be,' because such queries might criticise government. Challenges to the status quo are often suppressed within the policy system, while AI encourages them in its search for strengths. AI prioritises values, uniqueness and reciprocal relationships while the policy system prioritises rules, conformity and hierarchies. AI focuses on commitment to jointly developed goals, while the policy system privileges organisational silos which compete for resources and political recognition. So the first challenge to the use of AI in policy-making is to find common ground between the two paradigms.

The policy system is oriented to empirical research by officials, critical realism, gap analysis, needs analysis, statistical trends and measured results. AI, conversely, works through relational constructionism, representative participation and inductive research processes. Is there any meeting ground here? Can policy people be persuaded to think anew? Plenty of them know about alternative epistemologies but will 'the system' let them think differently? Can they be persuaded at least to try a new approach? A combination of approaches might produce policy outcomes that meet accountability standards and foster just sustainability at the same time.

Leading AI proponents concur that transforming systemic thinking is not easy, because of entrenched values and working models. Preskill and Catsambas (2006:139) comment, for instance, on the challenges of getting

evaluation [and policy] people to ‘reframe questions and issues to be appreciative. They note that: ‘Gap analysis, problem solving and deficit-based language are so ingrained in our discourse and cognitive processes that unlearning them is difficult.’ People revert to ‘well-known and comfortable patterns of negativity’ (ibid). AI offers a challenge, therefore, to reconceptualise policy and service issues, so that through discovery, dreaming and designing, ‘what works’ can be built upon, while needs analysis, problems, causes, options, solutions and action planning can become developmental opportunities rather than deficits and ‘enfeeblement’ to be overcome (Barge and Oliver 2003:126-128).

AI is reputedly helpful in organisations that are in turmoil (Barge and Oliver 2003:125). On the basis of extensive field work reported by AI practitioners, this may also be claimed in regard to conflicted societies, or groups within them which face challenges (Hammond and Royal 1998). A note of caution is sounded, nevertheless, by Rogers and Fraser (2003:77): ‘By seeking as explicitly for positive features as Appreciative Inquiry does, it runs the very real risk of papering over substantive problems and in fact colluding with the powerful people who want the unexamined to remain so.’ In their view this might mean that AI works well when the purpose is to build courage and strength to deal with known problems. It might not work so well if problems are yet to surface, there is no agreement about their nature, or there is systemic resistance to addressing them. Perhaps AI ‘can serve to restate and reframe what is valuable, useful and important’ (ibid:80). From such reframing, new insight into impacts and possibilities may emerge.

AI can be time-consuming so it is important to design projects with the involvement of senior officials, so that they do not regard AI-based policy work as a waste of time. Because of the focus on relationship-building inherent in AI, its processes may take longer than directive top-down exercises would take. Policy analysts and their managers need to see tangible benefits for their investments in AI projects involving programme

and service development. This expectation represents a project design and implementation challenge for AI. As Bushe (2007:5) notes, it is important to agree on possibility statements ‘without long, laborious meetings that sap the energy and generativity from the group.’ He suggests that ‘AI generates a collective agreement about what people want to do together and enough structure and energy to mobilize action in the service of those agreements. When that happens, many problems get solved’ (ibid:7).

In the discovery phase of an AI project, it is necessary to secure working agreement on what staff members and stakeholders view as positive in the system or organisation. As Barge and Oliver (2003:129) point out, ‘people will value and appreciate different aspects of organizational life.’ All AI contributions have to be valued as having equal worth, irrespective of hierarchical realities. This can pose difficulties in a bureaucracy. Mutual respect and collaboration is essential, for deciding ‘which aspects are to be brought to the foreground and which moved to the background’ (ibid). As Van der Haar and Hosking (2004:1032) comment: ‘Given relational constructionist premises, it [is] important to appreciate that what is “positive” is also a variable local construction.’ Each of us has a unique view of the world and how we make sense of it.

There are external realities that have to be taken into account as well. Rogers and Fraser (2003:77) express concern that the AI focus on perceptions of reality must be balanced by objective realities such as ‘grinding poverty, gender inequality, violence and disease.’ Added to these environmental constraints, there are internal realities such as budgets, tradeoffs and multiple policy options for which ethically tenable cases can be made. In framing the debate, AI facilitators have to take care that, in emphasising the positive, they do not ignore ‘other equally important and appropriate types of conversation and emotionality within organizations that may foster learning and change’ (Barge and Oliver 2003:125).



Many research participants alluded to aspects of the public service culture and system which could be antithetical to possibility-oriented thinking. The cultural edifice was said to involve an analytical cynicism which, claiming critical theory as its provenance, entails negatively criticising everything, while resisting change and building very little. Often covert in organisations and reinforced by power structures, it is a debilitating illness. Its presence represents an entrenched challenge to any attempt at systemic change through building on strengths. Sometimes it poses as risk management, but it is actually about control, conformity, protecting power bases, entrenched values, interests, competitive negotiating positions and access to funding streams. The policy system has its ‘dark side,’ where ethics is considered ‘murky,’ but AI and this research invite us to think in hope beyond it, to a more constructive shared future.

The offset to the ‘dark side’ of the policy system is its ‘positive core,’ as identified in my appreciative interviews. There are many well resourced public service organisations characterised by clarity of purpose; effective stakeholder relationships; staff engagement with, and commitment to, a strategic vision that focuses on societal and environmental wellbeing; receptivity to innovation and tolerance for mistakes as opportunities for learning. These are the agencies in which the use of AI for policy development would stimulate imaginative new approaches to the issues that are sometimes labelled ‘wicked problems,’ if their leaders were prepared to accept ambiguity and ongoing change. The use of AI, experimentally to begin with, might reduce defensiveness and gradually bring about a much needed culture shift in the policy system at large, if key policy actors are willing to look beyond the constraints of organisational attitudes that should be challenged, and open their minds to appreciative possibilities.

This research has created a conceptual space for such experimentation to occur. On reviewing all that I learned in this project, I decided that my new frameworks would benefit from the inclusion of problem identification questions (routine in policy analysis models) along with the strength-based approach of AI. The idea was to elucidate strengths and assets, while acknowledging difficulties and needs. Treating the two methodological approaches as mutually exclusive seemed excessively rigid, once the CST ethical filters were superimposed on the emergent analytical process. CST itself articulates this type of strategy as ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or.’ Wanting to optimise reflective opportunities in my three new frameworks, I sought the best synthesis of CST, AI and current policy analysis models.

#### **19.4 Framework 1: Needs assessment for policies and programmes**

Needs assessment is inherently a problem-solving process. A problem has created a need, the nature and causes of which are analysed, following which options are developed to remedy it and a solution is decided upon. The assumption is that a deficit exists, which needs amelioration. In seeking the ‘positive core’ in a system or set of circumstances, on the other hand, AI focuses on ‘what works’ rather than on what is failing. A needs assessment, in AI terms, ‘discovers’ systemic strengths that can be built on. It notes what is not working well, but integrates it into a ‘provocative proposition,’ or ‘possibility statement,’ based on the best of what is possible. This is done through strategic ‘discovery’ questions and invitations to imagine or ‘dream’ an ideal future.

This assessment is based on a series of detailed and specific questions that invite policy specialists to approach differently the needs and potential of their clients and those of the system within which they do their work. They are asked to focus on strengths, while realistically assessing the impacts of current barriers to the achievement of just sustainability. The first new

framework is outlined below, with the CST principles highlighted to ensure users focus on the ethics driving these three new tools. Framework 1 generates momentum for change, through questions which express needs in terms of social morality and just sustainability.

## ***Social policy and programme needs assessment***

### ***Specific policy or programme***

- State rental housing allocation or job-seeker assistance (for example)

#### ***1 CST, society and the environment – ethical norms and needs***

- How should **human dignity and authentic development**<sup>ii</sup> drive this new policy or programme, proposal or amendment?
- In what ways will this new proposal or amendment **support families**?
- What decisions and processes in this policy area will foster the **common good and solidarity** within New Zealand society?
- How are **rights and responsibilities** aligned in the policy proposals?
- How and to what extent are **social justice and equity** ensured?
- How is an **option for the poor** incorporated in current policy?
- How should new policy **address the interests of minority cultures**?
- How should new policy help to sustain **the natural environment**?

#### ***2 CST, the economy and the political system – ethical norms and needs***

- How should policies **transform unjust economic structures**?
- How are **universal rights to the goods of creation** recognised?
- How is the **dignity of work** acknowledged in current policy?
- Is government input consistent with the **subsidiarity** principle?
- What safeguards do current policies and programmes provide for all to **participate effectively in civil and political processes**?
- In what ways do current policies contribute to **peace** within New Zealand and externally through **global solidarity** with poor people?

### ***3 AI – Discovering needs, strengths, opportunities and potential***

- Identify through community-based AI, the nature, incidence and prevalence of need. Who is affected and how?<sup>iii</sup> What do they value?
- What are the key historical, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental influences on the identified needs?<sup>iv</sup>
- What are the most significant causes of the current needs?
- What ethical issues are emerging from the needs identification?
- What strengths do people draw on to overcome difficulties?
- Describe existing policies and services which aim to meet the need.
- What do clients experience when the existing policies and services operate at their best? From the clients' perspectives, what should be built upon for the future?
- In what ways are the best aspects of the existing policies and services aligned with the principles of CST? What would strengthen this alignment?

### ***4 AI – Dreaming and imagining the possibilities for positive change***

- What can be learned from the present situation that will generate positive energy for moving into the future?
- What would represent ideal policy and service delivery for clients and communities?<sup>v</sup> What do they hope for?
- How might the servicing agency itself contribute to generating hope in the minds of its clients?
- If you could make three changes to this policy, programme or service, what would they be? How would they make a positive difference and for whom? What would clients see that was different?
- What would be the highest and best outcomes from needs-responsive and CST-based changes or new policy developments?
- Name the likely client benefits, emergent options and opportunities for positive change arising from the above analysis. What is possible and should be sought?

### ***5 Prioritising the emergent needs, opportunities and benefits***

- What stands out among the clients' current needs, hopes and dreams for the future?<sup>vi</sup>
- What are the most pressing needs to be addressed?
- How might they be addressed?

- Which opportunities for change show greatest potential for fostering just sustainability through new policy and programme outcomes?
- Provide analysis to show how the application of the CST principles to each identified opportunity will respond to ethical concerns and contribute to more justly sustainable processes and outcomes.<sup>vii</sup>

## ***6 Ethical implications of this needs assessment***

- What ethical issues are evident from the themes in this assessment?
- Which current issues (a) support, (b) undercut the CST principles?
- What resources would be required to address the prioritised needs and opportunities? Where would they come from?
- Identify systemic strengths that can be built upon to make changes.
- Identify the benefits to clients and communities of making changes.
- Identify the risks to client outcomes and just sustainability if changes are not made.
- What likelihood is there that change could produce inadvertent consequences that did not meet the CST-based ethical standards? How would this risk be addressed?
- Who has power to make the decisions? What values and visions for the future guide these decision-makers?
- How can these decision-makers be persuaded to ethics-based needs assessment and suggestions that foster just sustainability?
- Do the indicative responses emerging from this needs assessment address the identified client needs and ethical concerns of CST?

The above needs assessment framework is designed to elicit needs and potential of clients accessing programmes such as state rental housing and job-seeker case management services. In analysing policy effectiveness through AI, we would identify systemic strengths and the extent to which the programmes meet the clients' needs. In discovering 'what is' we would focus on what can be built upon, since there is something good in every system. How does the state housing system operate at its very best? What aspects of it do we want to carry forward into the future? How can job seeker assistance capitalise on the energy and potential of people needing an

unemployment benefit while they position themselves to attain their highest potential through work?

The “Dream” phase of an AI-based needs assessment would identify people’s hopes in areas such as housing and employment, noting the policy aspects which could be enhanced through applying the CST principles in the interests of just sustainability. Clients’ aspirations would constitute their own ‘possibility statements’ and generate momentum for change. These statements would be examined individually, analysed for recurrent themes and aggregated for input to new policy and programme design. The CST principles would act as a filter for assessing the ethical status of presenting needs and emergent possibilities for addressing them. At this point the needs assessment would be complete.

## **19.5 Framework 2: Applying CST and AI to policy development**

The second framework unfolds along similar lines to that outlined in the first, this time integrating query techniques that underpin the AI ‘Design’ phase with the analytical focus of policy-making. Policy development is usually based on a problem-solving approach, as is needs assessment. There are opportunities to combine the visionary, energy generating aspects of AI with the pragmatic focus demanded by politicians and senior officials on the resolution of issues. Framework 2 again overlays visionary and pragmatic streams of thought with the ethical analysis prompted by the CST principles.

During the fieldwork phase of this research, it became apparent that some public servants had noticed that risk aversion was limiting innovation. They had seen introverted and self-serving policy-making processes in use. An absence of opportunities for ethical analysis of policy needs and options was

also identified. The challenge, complexity and time-consuming nature of such analysis, nevertheless, are not valid reasons to avoid doing it.

Framework 2 is offered as a mechanism for the introduction of ethics into the policy system itself. Its basis in AI suggests it would help to dispel fear and conflict in policy debate. It would complement the intervention logic model and hopefully open the way for imaginative possibility. Its ethical filters, provided by the CST principles, serve to orient policy design and development towards the ethical components of just sustainability.

## ***Social policy design and development***

### ***Policy domain or specific programme***

- State rental housing allocation or job-seeker assistance (for example)

#### ***1 Identified needs, strengths and opportunities***

- The AI-based needs assessment has ‘Discovered’ unmet needs among ..... (specific groups of clients) suggesting a requirement for ..... (types of policy responses).
- The key ethical issues arising from clients’ experiences with existing programmes and services are .....
- In the ‘Dream’ phase of an AI needs assessment, the clients have expressed the hope that .....
- Identified strengths that can be built upon include .....
- Identified gaps or opportunities in existing programmes include .....

#### ***2 Appreciative Inquiry – designing what should be***

- What should there be more of? What should there be less of?
- What are the possibilities for policy design or amendment? Which possibilities are most in accord with client aspirations?

- Which possibilities would draw on existing institutional strengths in strategy, organisational capacity and resourcing?
- In what ways is government response likely to involve policy tools such as information provision, taxes and transfer payments, direct provision, funding to other providers, project partnerships, legislation, regulation, or any combination of these tools?
- Which responses would address concerns of just sustainability, including equity?
- Which responses are aligned with the existing goals of government? Which would generate new goals or require different governance arrangements?

### ***3 Working through a policy development cycle***

- Clearly state the issue or need to be addressed, the evidence of its impact and emergent opportunities for justly sustainable resolution<sup>viii</sup>
- Analyse data for patterns and trends in the impacts to date
- Identify clients' and stakeholders' interests in new policy directions, as evidenced through public consultation processes<sup>ix</sup>
- What priority should government attach to a policy response to the identified needs or opportunities?
- Indicate the goals, outputs and outcomes that would be expected of a new or amended policy. What ethical assumptions would drive it?
- What are the possible innovations and solutions? Develop a causal intervention logic model to identify the rationale for policy choices<sup>x</sup>
- Do we know that if we take certain actions, certain results will eventuate? How do we know this? Will achievement of the specified outcomes actually meet the identified needs and address the ethical issues evident from the needs assessment?<sup>xi</sup>
- What policy tools will be used to produce results that support the policy goals? What levels and combination of persuasion, regulation, incentives, information provision, capacity-building or funding will they involve? How will they be assessed for effectiveness, efficiency and equity?<sup>xii</sup>
- What benefits will the preferred policy direction provide and to whom? Who are the intended target groups and why those groups?
- What trade-offs are attached to each policy option and choice of implementation tools? How is each target group and stakeholder group likely to assess the impacts of each trade-off?<sup>xiii</sup>
- What risks are attached to the recommended policy option and to other feasible options?



- What are the possible consequences of the proposed policy or programme? On what scale might consequences occur? Which groups in society are likely to be affected by them and in what ways?

#### ***4 Examining policy consequences: CST, society, the environment***

- How does this policy demonstrate **respect for human dignity** by helping people to **develop themselves authentically**?
- How does this policy **support families** in the discharge of their moral, social and economic roles?
- Does this policy allocate public resources in ways that **serve the common good** and promote **solidarity** among our diverse community groups?
- How does this policy support capacity-building so that all members of society have **freedom** to exercise their **rights**, discharge their **responsibilities** and make effective choices?
- How does this policy affirm **social justice and equity** and ensure that powerful groups' interests do not overwhelm the rights of those with less influence? How does it help the latter improve their situation?
- What is the contribution of this policy towards alleviation of poverty in New Zealand communities? To what extent is it framed as a **preferential option for the poor**? How much say do poor people have in determining their needs and resource access in this policy?
- How is **respect for diverse cultural aspirations**, practices and social contributions embedded in this policy or programme?
- How does this policy or programme cause New Zealand society to meet its ethical responsibilities as **stewards of creation**? In what ways does it recognise our duty to future generations regarding natural resource use and environmental protection?

#### ***5 Examining policy consequences: CST, the economy and politics***

- In what ways are this policy and its economic drivers influenced by morality and ethics? How does the policy address **economic justice**?
- How does this policy address the **universal destination of created goods** re social responsibilities of property and business ownership? Is access to resources (e.g. housing) ensured on the basis of need or on a client's ability to pay?
- How will this policy or programme foster increased employment opportunities for groups limited in their **access to paid work**? How is respect for the **dignity of unemployed persons** demonstrated?

- In terms of the **subsidiarity principle**, how does this policy enable intermediate organisations to design and deliver social services, with government resourcing as needed to achieve justly sustainable outcomes? How well does the policy **supplement** local capacity while leaving community organisations free to discharge their own proper roles?
- How have affected stakeholders, especially powerless groups, been able to **participate in the development** of this policy and influence its directions, decisions and indicative resource allocations?
- What incentives are in this policy for New Zealand society to adopt more justly sustainable models for production and consumption, in the interests of **global peace, development and solidarity**?

## ***6 Ethical implications of the proposed policy or programme***

- How does this policy or programme address the identified client needs? Who gains from it? Who carries its cost? Who misses out on its benefits?
- What resources are required for implementation of the proposed policy or programme? Where will the resources come from?
- In what ways does this policy complement other policies in the same and related policy domains? To what extent is it new thinking?
- What implications does the new policy have for working across the whole of government?
- In what measurable ways will the CST ethical principles applied in the development of this policy become evident in its implementation and evaluation? What will clients and communities see that is different once it takes effect?
- In what ways will this policy contribute to just sustainability in New Zealand and what evidence will be offered to substantiate this?

Pervasive injustice demands policy analysis as suggested in Framework 2. The same approach is adopted in Framework 3, which uses AI ‘Destiny’ and ‘Delivery’ questions to identify optimal changes, how they would be implemented, by whom and with what potential impacts. Social policy would aim to achieve a reduced waiting list for state rental houses, through better use of the housing stock and facilitation of other housing options. The goal of optimum access to jobs for all who can and want to work would be reinforced by job search and placement services that were more consciously client-oriented and respectful of people’s diverse circumstances.

## **19.6 Framework 3: Policy implementation and service delivery ethics**

Policy implementation and service delivery have as much impact on people accessing government programmes as does the evolution of the policy itself. While development and implementation are intimately linked, in practice they are not always designed together. Implementation capability and operational detail are often assumed to be in place locally. The ensuing gap between policy theory and servicing practice is often the source of injustice; hence the need for a framework which applies CST and AI to the front-line client interface, complementing the application of Framework 2 to the policy-making process that occurs behind the scenes.

In providing a means to query the ethical basis for policy implementation, Framework 3 also references two aspects of social policy which require interviews with clients, namely state rental housing needs assessment and job seeker case management. It is designed, nevertheless, to be applied to the client interactions associated with any social policy domain.

### ***Client-focused policy implementation and service delivery***

#### ***Policy domain or specific programme***

- State rental housing or job-seeker case management (for example)

#### ***1 High-quality appreciative interviewing***

- Do the interviews for job seeker case management or housing needs assessment demonstrate respectful<sup>xiv</sup> attention to people's stories and helpful shared exploration of what their experiences mean for them?
- What opportunities do the clients have to define their own needs, without this process being pre-empted by the interviewer?

- Are individual circumstances fully considered in the context of the clients' strengths and best experiences? Do the clients themselves drive the identification of possibilities, not being told what to do?
- Are the interviews structured to help clients identify their own values, hopes and dreams, and to express them as achievable goals?
- Does each client receive all the information on available resources (organisational and external) to enable him or her to make sound decisions? Do the interviewers know about everything available?
- Can the clients rely on the case managers or needs assessors to follow up on organisational commitments made to them?
- Will the goals and respective responsibilities agreed to during the interview ensure positive change for the clients on their own terms?
- What will be different for the clients as a result of participation in the programme? What will they do differently themselves?
- Do the clients leave the organisation feeling they have been treated fairly? How does the agency ascertain this?
- Is the agency's engagement with each client consistent with the CST principles, especially as regards human dignity, and with the AI norms<sup>xv</sup> for strengths-based interviewing?

## ***2 CST-based reflections on client relationships***

- In what ways are the interviewers working *with* people, not *for* them, **respecting human dignity** through empowerment? What evidence is there that clients grow in self-confidence and self-determination?
- How does the organisation demonstrate commitment to **family well-being** through providing support services and facilitating successful housing and employment outcomes with the clients?
- How does this programme or service, geared to individual progress, contribute to **solidarity and the common good**? What benefits does successful implementation have for the community?
- How does the service enable clients to achieve an optimum balance of needs and **rights** on one hand and **responsibilities** to society on the other?
- How does this service foster **social justice and equity**, ensuring fair access to public resources based on need, through redistribution of resources to ensure no one lacks the basics for a decent life? How is justice served when designated resources are insufficient to meet all the identified needs? How are clients assisted with other options?

- How are case management and needs assessment processes oriented to a **preferential option for the poor**? Who is considered poor and on what factors is such an assessment based?
- How does the service demonstrate **respect for cultural diversity and autonomy**? What safeguards are there against judgmentalism and stereotyping through discriminating assumptions?
- In what ways does the programme contribute to good **stewardship of creation** by promoting just sustainability to prevent environmental injustice?
- How does the programme remove **unjust economic structures** or alleviate their impacts on powerless people? How is structural information deduced from local casework fed back to government?
- How does implementation of this housing or employment programme recognise the **rights of all to the goods of creation**?
- How is the **dignity of work** acknowledged in the way the programme is implemented? How are adequate incomes protected?
- How does **subsidiarity** work in this policy or programme? Who designed the implementation strategy? With whose input? How much influence did community representatives have in shaping it for local use? In what ways does the state programme **supplement** or leverage local energies and resources?
- How are clients enabled to **participate** more actively **in civic processes** as a result of engaging in this programme?
- What contributions does this programme, if implemented effectively through client interviews, make to **peace** and social cohesion in local communities and to **international solidarity**? (for example through assisting refugees)

### ***3 CST and AI implications for programme and service delivery***

- What are the ethical consequences of rationing resources or services to the extent that some poor people can not access them?
- To what extent does the programme have impacts on third parties? Is anyone significantly disadvantaged by it? How are any unplanned consequences managed once they have become apparent?
- How will the organisation ensure that criteria for assessing the ethics of policy and programme outcomes are included in policy development and evaluation frameworks?
- What processes will capture the experiences of clients and the perceptions of community advocates as regards the ethics actually demonstrated in programme implementation? How will this feedback inform the next policy iterations?

- In what ways does the implementation of this programme or service contribute to just sustainability in New Zealand?
- Who needs to be persuaded at senior levels that an ethical focus can be addressed within baseline budgets by thinking anew about the consequences of policy decisions and the quality of their implementation?

This ethics-focused analysis framework for programme implementation and service delivery represents the ‘destiny’ and ‘delivery’ aspects of AI. Institutional responses indicate what will happen if positive change occurs, and what will make a substantive difference to the outcomes experienced by clients of the government’s social programmes. The use of AI increases the likelihood that housing and job-seeker clients will take control of their own processes. In appreciative interviews they focus on their strengths, articulate their dreams and move towards their own goals, supported as necessary by social programmes involving public resources accessible to them on the basis of need and justice. The CST principles provide a coherent ethical framework against which programme and service quality, impacts and outcomes can be assessed.

The three frameworks capture the key issues identified in the research literature and the fieldwork as essential for policy-making that would ensure social and environmental justice. Frameworks for two later stages of the policy process, namely (1) evaluation and (2) applied ethics training for policy analysts and service managers could be developed to complement those outlined above. I had considered designing these now, but found the questions already supplied are applicable to the later processes as well. For that reason, development of detailed evaluation and training models could be undertaken subsequent to this research project. The needs analysis, policy development and service delivery frameworks contributed above illustrate the joint applicability of CST and AI for the purposes of this research.

The endnotes to this chapter, concerning what I have described as ‘level 2’ frameworks, indicate the range of models that would need to be developed to support the three over-arching frameworks offered above. CST and AI both offer reservoirs of insight and analysis to facilitate the development of detailed models. Supplementary frameworks of the types indicated would elaborate on this research in practical ways.

This chapter has illustrated some potential enhancements to housing and employment policy analysis and service effectiveness. Its practical applications support the original two-part research proposition. This suggested that (1) a greater focus on policy ethics is needed and (2) Catholic Social Teaching could contribute substantially to such a focus. There now remains a need to link the research proposition, theory, principles, methods, fieldwork findings and potential applications, through articulating in Chapter 20 the overall research conclusions.

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<sup>i</sup> There may be opportunities for further research and piloting to develop the three proposed tools in more detail, by means of second-level or supporting frameworks following this research.

<sup>ii</sup> In the text of each new framework, I have emboldened the CST principles, to focus policy actors’ attention continually on them as the purpose for my proposed analysis and development approach. This will assist with familiarisation and maybe internalisation, of the principles themselves.

<sup>iii</sup> This would require a second-level framework designed as a set of Appreciative Interviews conducted with present and potential clients of the policy, to inform the needs assessment. Then a standard needs analysis structure can be used to locate, describe and quantify the need in detail, retaining the positive AI focus while capturing aspects that require attention.

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<sup>iv</sup> A second-level analysis in the form of an environmental scan would be needed, to frame the needs assessment and contextualise new policy and service proposals and initiatives.

<sup>v</sup> Second-level questionnaires would pick up housing, employment and other social policy detail to frame responsive analysis of policy options and inform new policy design, informed by clients' greatest hopes for change.

<sup>vi</sup> Prioritisation criteria based on the CST principles would need to be developed as a level 2 framework. Application of such a framework will capture the ethical issues related to clients' realities, the responses to which will inform subsequent policy development

<sup>vii</sup> A matrix with the CST principles along the horizontal axis and the needs/opportunities listed vertically would serve to integrate these two perspectives in a level 2 detailed analysis.

<sup>viii</sup> This information can be drawn from a needs assessment and from a second-level set of strategic and analytical questions

<sup>ix</sup> A public consultation process and analytical framework could be designed as a level 2 tool.

<sup>x</sup> The intervention logic model would specify the range of policy alternatives developed and evaluated according to ethical, political, social, economic, environmental, cultural, legal and administrative criteria. It would then identify inputs, outputs, short-term, medium-term and long-range outcomes and the causal relationships between each of these elements.

<sup>xi</sup> The intervention logic model should provide credible answers to these queries. Measurements will need to be developed to facilitate evaluation of the policy.

<sup>xii</sup> Effectiveness, efficiency and equity criteria (Bridgman and Davis 2000:74) will need to be developed and applied to the use of each instrument to be used in implementing the policy.

<sup>xiii</sup> Trade-offs can be mapped and compared among stakeholder groups through the use of a matrix developed as a level 2 framework.

<sup>xiv</sup> Evidence of respect shown to clients and other facets of the client/organisation relationship could be specified in a CST and AI-based client service charter designed as a level 2 framework.

<sup>xv</sup> Appreciative Inquiry interview models could be designed for generic social policy casework and tailored to specific policy and programme domains as level 2 frameworks.



## Chapter Twenty

### Conclusions and reflections: that we might do good

As a public service manager I sought to tap into strategic creativity in my staff by asking the right questions at the right times. I wanted them to reflect deeply on what they were doing, whose purposes were being served, what impacts their work would have in the community and how they could extend themselves to give of their best. Many of them went on to inculcate in their own staff a similar sense of striving to achieve what really matters ethically. In the political and economic turbulence of the 1980s, 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, we were all challenged to forge our own ethical positions and apply them to our work, with varying degrees of systemic concurrence. It was not easy.

In seeking an ethical framework for this research, I reached into my own past, prompted by Ruth Smithies' chapter on Catholic Social Teaching in *Voices for Justice* (Boston and Cameron 1994). Here was a set of principles that encapsulated what I thought governance and public service should embody – a focus on clients' dignity and the solidarity of communities, combined with a drive to eliminate social and economic injustice because it was unworthy of humanity and injurious to the natural world.

I discovered similarities to CST in academic discourse – in the integrated concept of just sustainability (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2002; Agyeman and Evans 2003, 2004). The desired outcomes of just sustainability seemed congruent with the ethics of CST and provided a conceptual extension to the sustainable development focus which permeates mainstream public policy thinking in New Zealand. In these two discourses, one faith-based, the other secular, I found the theoretical genesis of this research.

The strategic question ‘Are we doing good?’ is a challenge to accepted norms, yet we seldom stop to think about it. In my public service work, and during this research, I met dedicated, professional people who wanted to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Like me, they often felt constrained by the officially sanctioned norms which dominated our strategy and actions. Strategic planning and development lacked an avenue for the expression and application of ethics. Systems and processes were entrenched, their purposes lost in antiquity but their continuation ensured through custom and practice. Clients were not always well served, but ethics-based inquiry and analysis were actively discouraged. ‘Serving the government of the day’ had clear professional norms and organisationally imposed boundaries on what could be discussed and analysed.

In 2005, as Part One of this research took shape, I encountered Appreciative Inquiry, courtesy of Bliss Browne, the creator of ‘Imagine Chicago.’ She had come here at the behest of the Waitakere City Council and I participated in her seminar. Here was an avenue, at last, for asking strategic questions to stimulate new thinking in a helpful, energised way. One could approach ethical issues (including those related to policy outcomes) not through direct challenge to orthodoxy, but by enabling people to draw strength from their highest achievements, their deepest values and their visions of how life could be. As AI affirms, flowers turn towards the sunlight, the generative source of energy and creativity.

A melding of Appreciative Inquiry with Catholic Social Teaching created intellectual and ethical fuel for this research. The social constructionism of AI and the social relevance of the CST tradition were combined, to frame questions about the ethics of public policy outcomes, to which the research participants responded avidly. Indeed, as I discovered, the Catholic Church itself had often used AI to generate hope and energy in its pastoral work.

To assist in my creative process, I adopted a three-part research process and dissertation structure. Part One was about exploring (through the literature) people's drivers for doing good, in the face of injustice and systemic hindrance, along with ethical principles to guide such endeavour (CST) and theories about institutions and systems. Part Two grounded my evolving understanding by means of a carefully chosen fieldwork approach (AI), which drew out people's deep insights into ethical imperatives for policy-making. Part Three focused aspirationally on the interpretation of the field work findings, their implications for policy-making, the links between CST and policy ethics, and the application of new integrated AI/CST frameworks for policy analysis and development.

As the project evolved, the energy emanating from my research participants, buttressed by the theory, underscored my confidence in the chosen research purpose, ethical orientation and project methodology. The development of my three new policy-making frameworks strengthened the conviction I had gained through the research that there is, indeed, a pressing need and an opportunity to enhance policy-making in this country by focusing explicitly on the ethical implications and consequences of policy decisions. I came to believe, furthermore, that CST offers a coherent, morally rigorous model for addressing social, environmental, economic and political concerns that, left as they are, will compromise our progress towards just sustainability.

## **20.1 Towards just sustainability**

The foregoing research has affirmed that just sustainability is worth striving for. It is not an option, but is integral to the survival of humanity and to the nurture of our ecosystem. Here we see the importance of the research subject-matter and that of our policy responses to the emerging issues.

Classical economics-based policy-making has failed us, as the evidence of social and environmental injustice demonstrates. We have a need and an opportunity to think anew. The research literature and the fieldwork demonstrated congruence regarding just sustainability, its components, the reasons for our failure to achieve it to date and creative ideas for the future. While the literature canvassed the global impacts of unsustainability, the research participants identified local circumstances that demand principled and practical responses. The interviewees also made it clear that we need to frame such responses in the language of ethics and find a workable consensus on such ethics..

The research highlighted not only a dearth of ethics-based analysis in policy debate and public discourse, but also the need for recognised settings for ethics-oriented debate about policy intent and impact – a ‘public square’ as it were (Anderson 2009). For policy to be principled, it must be anchored in public consensus on social morality and normative ethics. In the course of casting for research participants, I did encounter an atypical view that ethics was a ‘murky business,’ involving ‘normative probing’ that should be kept away from public service work. My interviewees knew it mattered in their work, however, but lacked time to focus on it properly. Several NGO participants and a few public servants abhorred the absence of official acknowledgment of its significance for policy-making.

Public consensus depends on the ability of citizens to participate in framing important goals such as just sustainability and the steps needed to achieve it. In public discourse, as in policy-making, therefore, we need robust negotiation framed by ethical principles, where all views can be aired and then modified in a search for compromise and common ground. Once that happens, practical contributions to the common good can be defined and agreed upon. A workable consensus can then be reached as to how the common good and the goal of just sustainability might be committed to, sought and attained.

In the course of the research, the potential was identified for Catholic Social Teaching to contribute to public consensus-building and long-term goals through its application to policy development. By definition, it is steeped in the language of ethics. The CST principles concerning society and the environment, with their focus on authenticity, justice and stewardship, suggest avenues for new approaches to policy dilemmas. Similarly, the CST principles relating to ethical concerns in the economy and in politics provide moral signposts for decision-making in government and its agencies. With its natural law foundation and biblical provenance, CST encapsulates deeply-held universal values.

## **20.2 Significant messages in the research findings**

Through the ethical lens of Catholic Social Teaching and the developmental mode of Appreciative Inquiry, this research has brought to light important insights about the status of just sustainability in New Zealand and the role of public policy in its future attainment. Just sustainability has been proposed in this project as the generic desired outcome for policy-making and public service in this country.

The accessed literature and the fieldwork have proven remarkably similar in their articulation of normative principles, diagnoses of systemic need and prescriptions for improvement. There are no areas where theory and practical insight contradict each other. On this basis, it can be safely claimed that (1) the public policy system does need a greater focus on ethics to increase the likelihood of justly sustainable outcomes and (2) there is scope for CST to contribute to the development of ethically sound policy, through moral guidance and application of its principles.

Based on the CST principles and the areas of concern identified by the research participants, the research has proposed that our processes of policy analysis, programme design and social service delivery be examined, and changed where necessary, in terms of the ethics that should underpin them. Three analytical frameworks have been offered to assist with this process. Their use is not restricted to housing and employment policy; they are suitable for adaptation to any aspect of policy-making, governance or client service. Follow-up frameworks for later stages of the policy process can readily be developed along the same lines as those contributed here.

The research makes several suggestions as to what should *be*, and what should *be done*. There is a need for ethics-based thinking about governance and government; about whose interests are best served by whose power; who should exercise which roles, how and where; who is accountable to whom and why; who the clients actually are; how clients should be treated and what is fair, equitable and supportive of the common good.

A systemic gulf between ‘doing well’ and ‘doing good’ has been identified, in the design and delivery of public policies, programmes and services. Our governance and policy assumptions are driven by political pragmatism rather than ethics leading to just sustainability, so it is unsurprising that decisions and processes that affect clients, are neither linked explicitly to norms of social morality nor conducive to just sustainability. Our emphasis on neutral value-free policy-making has, in fact, caused us to lose focus on ethical concerns. By default, the ethics of individualism, self-interest, consumerism and environmental exploitation have become dominant.

The project has identified congruence between interviewees’ aspirations, the CST principles and the ethics of just sustainability. The literature and the fieldwork agree on characteristics of a justly sustainable New Zealand and what we would see that was different once it was attained. So we seem clear

overall about the destination we are seeking, but designing the best route to get there, with everyone included, is the hard part. In the community and in the policy system that reflects its values, we need a shared social morality, rather than leaving ethical decisions to relativistic chance. For justice to be served, we need agreement on the ethics that should drive official decisions and their implementation in communities. We need government to lead a ‘national conversation’ about our shared ethical core, which would then underpin consensus on policy directions.

There are systemic strengths that we can build on and these constitute the AI ‘positive core.’ They include political and social stability; a tradition of fairness and equal opportunities; substantial public resources allocated to policies and programmes; a wealth of institutional knowledge and, above all, commitment among public servants to ‘making a difference’ for people. There is also much that needs ethical strengthening, in governance, policy development, decision-making and servicing clients, evidenced by market and policy failure in crucial domains such as housing and employment. Application of the CST principles demonstrates a pressing need to retrieve former norms of full employment, decent housing and a clean environment, while ensuring that public resource distribution leaves no one in poverty.

The research has identified many opportunities for attention to ethics to foster the common good in our policy processes. Some relate to desired changes in the public service culture, such as increased receptivity to innovation and less defensiveness about risk management. Free, frank and fearless policy advice should again become the norm. Sufficient time must be allowed for the complex thinking that ethics-based analysis requires. Inter-sectoral collaboration must replace competitive jostling for resources, through cross-cutting accountabilities at senior levels, to reduce gaps, overlaps and contradictions in policies and services.

Some proposed changes relate to the way our public service departments organise themselves. The CST principle of subsidiarity should be invoked to ensure that decisions are made at the competent level closest to those affected by them. The research interviews attest that government does not always ‘know best’ and does not always need to be ‘in charge.’ There is ample wisdom in communities that could be more effectively mobilised in policy-making, for the common good.

Policy analysts and developers need more direct interaction with the communities they serve. Their current working structures and timing demands are said to keep them enclosed in their institutions. Officials need to listen to people’s hopes and concerns and develop sensitivity to the duty of care that they owe to the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Then they can approach their policy-making with perspectives that are informed and appreciative of local needs and potential. This would allay concerns that policy analysts are too remote from the impacts of their recommendations to care about their consequences.

When public consultation is done by government agencies, it needs to demonstrate integrity, rather than coming across as a ‘tick the box’ exercise. Communities are cynical about poorly executed consultation, with the result that trust in government is diminished and local knowledge is not accessed to best effect. Respect for local leadership and expertise and some humility in officials’ communications with clients and citizens would improve cooperation between government, third sector organisations, ethnic minorities and other local representatives.

A need was identified for applied ethics training to ensure that front-line staff members in government agencies know how to demonstrate receptivity to clients’ needs and goals, rather than coming across as dismissive, authoritarian or judgmental. They should be able to exercise flexibility in



assessments and local decisions, and not apply a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Training in the use of the suggested CST and AI-based frameworks would help with this.

CST was affirmed throughout the research as a helpful set of principles that could form part of an ‘ethics arsenal’ to inform and guide public policy. It is an established tradition based on universal truths about ourselves and our relationships to each other and with nature. As such, it offers an extensive body of ethical insight and knowledge which is applicable to all aspects of policy-making, programme design and service delivery. At the start of the research project I wondered why we did not make greater use of it; now I believe we can, and should. Its universal principles can be contextualised to our secular policy environment. It can provide specific moral signposts addressed, as the Social Encyclicals are, to ‘all people of good will.’

### **20.3 Avenues for research consolidation and extension**

The research interviews with policy developers and public service managers evinced a very strong desire for their organisations to provide ethical criteria that would be part of the assessment of ‘what works’ when policies are designed, implemented and evaluated. Since these criteria have never been articulated, opportunities arise for research leading to their development and promulgation in each government agency. This could build on the findings and frameworks outlined in this project, and take many forms.

Firstly, there is scope for development of analytical frameworks to support the three offered already, as mentioned in the endnotes to Chapter 19. These include the design of appreciative interviews for needs assessment; questionnaires that would help to assess client responsiveness to putative policy options; matrices for working with clients to prioritise their needs and

goals, using the CST principles as cues; intervention logic models for social policies based on CST and AI; specification of social policy criteria for equity, sustainability and efficiency; development of CST-based indicators and measures of policy effectiveness; casework interview models based on CST and AI; and a client service charter based on CST.

Secondly, there are two more over-arching frameworks which could be added to those already designed for needs assessment, policy development and service delivery. One involves policy evaluation (Framework 4) and the other is a training programme in applied ethics (Framework 5). All five eventual models would need to be tested with pilot studies in particular settings prior to general release.

To embed ethics-based thinking in the policy process, a generic CST and AI-based framework would be needed for social policy evaluation. It would have stages applicable to each stage of the evaluation process – formative, process, summative. There would be an emphasis initially on formative evaluation and anticipatory impact analysis, the two areas where current institutional thinking seems embryonic at best. This would reflect the need identified in the research for assessment of potential impacts at the earliest stages of policy and programme development.

A CST and AI-based generic training module in applied ethics could also be developed for inclusion in tertiary courses in social policy and for in-house training programmes for policy analysts, managers and those exercising governance roles. It could be used to introduce ethical analysis to the public service, as an Appreciative Inquiry in several stages to inculcate a cultural change management strategy.

Thirdly, there are broader research opportunities arising from this project. Community research projects could be initiated as Appreciative Inquiries, for example, to create avenues for public debate as to local needs and the potential for achieving just sustainability. Processes for connecting local energies with public policies and resources could be explored, from a community development perspective. One of the goals could be to identify what changes are needed in the policy system to enable significant policy initiatives to be developed within, and driven by, communities, and then to secure commitments to act on what was discovered.

The publication of the latest social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), offers an opportunity for in-depth local consideration of its applicability to the New Zealand policy environment and its outcomes. Following research to capture the major current ethical issues, a series of workshops for policy stakeholders could be designed, by or in consultation with Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. These would be intended to help people identify, expand locally and apply what the Pope is teaching. The CST guidance in this new encyclical could then be expressed in terms of progress towards just sustainability in this country.

A ‘national conversation’ project, supported by researched briefing papers on key issues, could be developed intersectorally. It would aim to secure a working consensus within our diverse community on the ethics and values that should inform governance, policy-making, service delivery and public resource allocation, in terms of agreed norms for relationships in society. We would need to find agreement as to what the common good means to all of us, through a process that sanctioned strategic governance and policy decisions that would outlast short-term political leadership fluctuations. Amid the pluralism of our worldviews, we would be looking for what unites us, to provide a morally sound foundation for the future.

Lastly, we could engage in research to examine where in the world the application of CST has worked, how and why. The Mondragon example (mentioned in a Chapter 5 endnote) comes to mind. As a working instance of CST in action, its origins and outcomes bear investigation. Space precluded its consideration in this research project, so material which I had accumulated about it ended up on the cutting room floor. It is a significant avenue for later research as to the potential for experimentation along similar communitarian lines in this country.

#### **20.4 Doing good and doing better**

Early in the fieldwork phase of this project, I met with one of the research participants whom I have known for a long time. My friend leaned back, looked into the middle distance and reflected:

We do what government requires us to do and we do it well. We always meet our organisational objectives. Yet when I look at what happens in our communities, despite our best efforts, I often wonder – are we doing good? That to me is the big question.

In government agency offices all over the country, according to the research participants, individual public servants, motivated by a desire to make a difference in their communities, aspire to doing good. Sometimes they succeed in this, but their successes are not aided by a systemic focus on the normative ethics of policy impacts. Recall Alan Johnson's observation: 'The probability of a sense of ethics permeating the policy system is, in my view, minimal.' Instead, client-focused achievement is the product of local energy, commitment, expertise and good will. How much more affirming and effective the work of government would be, if organisations prioritised the ethics of right relationships among people and with the earth, rather than political expediency, risk avoidance, cost efficiencies and output numbers.

In conducting this research and preparing the dissertation, I canvassed several hundred official documents – policy papers, strategies and service descriptions of all kinds. They were redolent with aspirational words about public service conduct, integrity, accountability, responsibility and client relationships. This was fine, as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. There was no mention of ethical norms; no mention of the moral standing of policy processes or impacts on clients, communities or the environment.

Considering the extent of unmet need affecting disadvantaged people and the damage to our environment from economic activity, the absence of ethical deliberation to frame government's decisions and agency service implementation is a moral issue in itself. This research suggests that the lack of explicit ethical standards for policy-making allows injustice to flourish, even to be accepted as a meritocratic norm. As a nation, we can do better than this.

In concluding that policy-making should be referenced to explicit moral standards, such as those articulated in CST, the research offers fundamental challenges to orthodox assumptions and processes. Experiences recounted by the interviewees suggested that moral relativism has failed us, in the same ways that economic individualism has. In their conceptualisations of natural law, centuries ago, Aristotle and Aquinas may have located a justly sustainable trajectory. In the face of injustice and lack of sustainability, the research illustrates humanity's need to embrace new strategies for living interdependently.

The literature was explicit, and the participants expansive, about what was needed for ethical strengthening of the policy and service processes of government. In my chosen policy domains, reference to the CST principles

affirmed that decent housing is a pre-requisite for human dignity; that everyone has the right to decent, affordable housing; and that government has a key role in ensuring justice as regards access to housing. Work was acknowledged as integral to human development, and as such, critical for human dignity and well-being. Government has a key role in ensuring that those who want to work can do so and that publicly resourced job-seeker assistance programmes promote equity in access to the labour market.

As well as policy specifics, research attention was necessarily given to the ingredients for ethical approaches to governance and decision-making on the part of government and its agencies. It is clear that some decisions have to be made centrally, in the interests of national consistency and equitable resource distribution among communities. Yet areas were identified where local decisions about programme design, resourcing and access would produce more just policy outcomes. Policy and service quality were both seen as risking injustice through excessively rapid development and the absence of cross-sectoral integration. Potential exists for more effective local engagement in government processes and for more attention to be paid to community consultation. Again, we can do better, with the help of ethics-focused analysis, applied at the earliest stages of needs analysis and design and continuously throughout the policy and servicing processes.

The research provides three new policy-making frameworks based on CST and AI. These relate to (1) needs analysis, (2) policy design and (3) policy/service implementation. By injecting ethics into each of these processes, the frameworks underscore the applicability of the CST principles to policy and programme content and outcomes. Extensive scope is identified for additions to these embryonic tools. Their expansion offers ongoing opportunities for systemic contributions. Experimentation with these frameworks through focused AI projects in government agencies could help to embed the thinking and language of ethics within the public service, through repeated and diversified use of the tools themselves.

Through this research, I have come to understand the extent to which the moral worth of a system depends on the ethical foundations of its structural design and on its consequent impacts on people and the earth. A structure will work for justice if its governance principles and norms for relationships with clients and communities are soundly anchored in social morality, but not otherwise. Among my various findings, this is the most important.

We should heed the timeless principles that speak to the core of our humanity as in our work we look inside ourselves, reach out to our communities and affirm the needs of future generations. Pope Benedict XVI expresses the driving momentum for this, with reference to:

The inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the fundamental values of justice and peace (*CIV* 2009:54).

The Pope enjoins us, furthermore, to ‘rethink the path we are travelling together’ and aspire to:

...A spiritual dimension that must be present if development is to be authentic. It requires new eyes and a new heart, capable of rising above a materialistic vision of human events, capable of glimpsing in development the “beyond” that technology cannot give (*ibid*:77).

My suggested policy-making combinations of Catholic Social Teaching and Appreciative Inquiry are framed in the concepts and language of the policy system, based on the wisdom of papal teaching and grounded in the diverse experiences of my research participants. I hope that, as time passes, this

work will make a conceptual, ethical and systemic contribution to enhance the thinking of policy actors regarding just sustainability.

I hope also that, through more enlightened and just public policy, the people in the street, our typical citizens whose needs and aspirations introduced this research project, might eventually have a better chance of attaining their highest and best potential in a justly sustainable world.



## Postscript

Late in 2009, as this research neared its end, I became aware of potential for a breakthrough in institutional thinking related to ethics in policy-making. Something prompted the Institute for Policy Studies at Victoria University and the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at Otago University to convene a conference on *The Ethical Foundations of Public Policy*.

According to the promotional material, this conference was designed for policy-makers and researchers. Disciplines such as politics, theology, law and economics were to be accessed. On the one hand, the usual attention was likely to be paid to behavioural integrity within the public service. On the other hand, and unusually for a potential public sector audience in the heart of Wellington, the ethics of policy content and impact would also be considered. As is clear from the foregoing chapters, the latter focus had, six years ago, generated momentum for my research.

My curiosity was aroused. After years of systemic neglect of the ethical impacts of policy-making, its normative assumptions would be examined, in terms which, coincidentally, were closely aligned to the issues that emerged in my research. What had inspired the two universities to put this subject into the institutional arena? Why this topic, and why now? It seemed that a broader constituency than my research participants and me had become concerned at the absence of ethical deliberation in the public policy process.

With a sense of renewed hope, I attended the conference in December 2009 to find out more. Some three hundred participants from the academic, non-government and public sectors attended. The presentations introduced issues that proved to be congruent with those identified in my research. There was widespread recognition that ethics and morality mattered for public policy,

but that they had been significantly neglected in analytical and decision-making processes. As with my interviewees, an appetite for deep discussion involving consensus-building surfaced among the conference delegates. In the light of major ethical issues facing humanity, people saw the need to open our minds to ideas beyond those which we had rationalised to date.

The conference convenor advised me that the conference impetus had come from the university sector, so it had not been initiated within the public service. In a parallel with public sector indifference, a quarter century had elapsed without academic attention to policy ethics. It seemed opportune to stimulate debate about doing well, doing good and doing the right thing. Public policy and theology academics wanted to explore ramifications of applied ethics to the norms and processes of policy-making.

I have deliberately not integrated the conference proceedings within the body of my thesis because of its timing. It took place after all my theorising, expert interviews and developmental work had been completed. While it has not influenced my findings, its occurrence has given them added validation. There has, until now, been minimal focus on the ethics of policy outcomes and our society and environment are the poorer for that. We needed a gathering of this type, to introduce new ways of thinking.

If the conference deliberations alter the levels of political and public service recognition of the ethical significance of policy-making, that would be beneficial for our communities, for powerless people who are inherently vulnerable, for those who are marginalised and disadvantaged by current policies and for our natural environment. There might be a portal for my findings and analytical frameworks to find a home in the policy system. In that way, my contribution to ‘doing good’ in public policy would evolve.

## Appendix One

### The Social Magisterium in summary

**Rerum Novarum: On the Condition of Labour** (Pope Leo XIII 1891), concerned industrial working conditions; worker exploitation and poverty in urbanising societies after the Industrial Revolution; workers' rights; and wages sufficient to support a family

**Quadragesimo Anno: The Reconstruction of the Social Order** (Pope Pius XI 1931), concerned social justice and the role of government, written in the context of the Great Depression; advocated that wealth be distributed justly; recommended corporatist systems of governance to guard against totalitarianism; introduced the concept of subsidiarity as a governance principle for key decisions to be made as close as possible to their point of local impact; governments are to intervene only when smaller bodies need assistance

**Mater et Magistra: Christianity and Social Progress** (Pope John XXIII 1961), concerned an increasing economic gap between rich and poor nations and the moral duty to share fairly the benefits of new technology; government responsibility to promote social justice; need for international cooperation and global justice to offset the negative impacts of centuries of colonisation in the Third World

**Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth** (Pope John XXIII 1963), concerned the Cold War, the threat of nuclear destruction and an exhortation to conflicting power-brokers to consider their responsibilities to humanity; stated that peace is achievable through recognition of both rights and responsibilities; acknowledged individual human rights and the moral requirement to balance these against the wellbeing of society as a whole

**Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World** (Second Vatican Council/ Pope Paul VI 1965), concerned the need for the Church to recognise and act upon the 'signs of the times'; to use inductive reasoning in conjunction with the universal principles of natural law; to respond constructively to traditional values being questioned; recognition of cultural diversity; justice and peace are closely linked

**Populorum Progressio: The Development of Peoples** (Pope Paul VI 1967), concerned risks to world peace of increasing economic and social gaps between developed and developing nations; criticised the profit orientation of capitalism to the detriment of social equity; advocated contextual approaches to economic problems; linked peace with human development

**Octogesima Adveniens: A Call to Action** (Pope Paul VI 1971), concerned socio-economic marginalisation of millions displaced by rapid urban growth; encouraged political action by Church members against institutional structures which create social injustice; promoted social participation and repudiated all forms of discrimination; linked social and environmental justice; called for environmental protection

**Iustitia in Mundo: Justice in the World** (World Synod of Bishops/ Pope Paul VI 1971), provided Vatican input to then-current debate about the structural injustices identified by liberation theology; stressed the spiritual and practical need for the Church to pursue social justice actively, to alleviate the conditions of poor and oppressed communities; encouraged powerful nations and rich communities within them to reduce their consumption of the world's resources and to share their wealth with those who have nothing

**Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the Modern World** (Pope Paul VI 1975), concerned secularism and atheism, especially in the First World; promoted the spiritual dimension of justice and introduced the idea that injustice can be caused by the way in which society is organised; taught that unjust socio-economic structures constitute a social sin; real human freedom has a spiritual focus as well as a material one

**Laborem Exercens: On Human Work** (Pope John Paul II 1981), stated that meaningful work is critical to human dignity and social justice; that people are the subjects of work, not its objects or instruments; that people have the right and the obligation to work, but that they should be supported by the community if they are unable to do so; that wages should be sufficient to maintain a family and enable social participation; that people are more important than profits

**Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern** (Pope John Paul II 1987), addressed global division into trans-national economic blocs, with disparities in wealth; described the state of excessively wealthy nations as 'super-development' compared with the underdevelopment of poor countries; introduced the term 'structures of sin' to portray social injustice and criticised wealthy nations for their consumerism, self-absorption and lack of solidarity with poorer societies; introduced the idea of 'authentic human development'

**Centesimus Annus: The Hundredth Year** (Pope John Paul II 1991), commemorated a century of CST since *Rerum Novarum*; synthesised the development of the CST discourse; noted the peaceful role that the Church played in the collapse of communism; criticised

socialism because its collective approach compromises human dignity and capitalism because of its excessive emphasis on individualism; affirmed the preferential option for the poor; repudiated consumerism, self-centredness and greed; focused on human personalism, subjectivity, authentic development and capacity for transcendence

**Caritas in Veritate: Charity in Truth** (Pope Benedict XVI 2009) concerns ethics in social and economic interactions and with putting ‘people-centred ethics’ into economic and political processes; authentic development possible only through the application of charity, truth and justice; global economic crisis has shown the moral tenor of society as defective so our social, political and economic assumptions and systems need to be re-designed; also need to reassess the role of the state; need for greater attention to environmental stewardship, so that ecological costs will be borne by those who incur them, not by other living people or future generations; human interaction should be governed by the ‘logic of unconditional gift’ based on respect for people, nature and life itself; presence of ethical dilemmas in our use of the market economy and technology; integral human development assumes freedom of choice and personal responsibility to make decisions that foster inclusiveness, solidarity and the common good; full updated coverage of ‘traditional’ CST concerns and some new insights about respect for life and globalisation. The key insight in *CIV* (2009) for this research is the Pope’s insistence that greater attention to the ethical dimensions of our decisions and actions is needed.

While dealing mainly with other areas of theology, Pope John Paul II’s encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), also refer to aspects of the ‘social question,’ as do the earlier letters from Pope Benedict XVI, namely *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) and *Spe Salvi* (2007). In the earlier Magisterium, the *Christmas Messages* of Pope Pius XII (1942 and 1944) represent that Pope’s CST input, in lieu of a social encyclical. Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968) has come into CST focus with the recent inclusion of ‘life ethics’ in *Caritas in Veritate*. In addition, Papal *World Day of Peace Messages* each year provide additional sources of focused CST commentary.

References for the above summaries:

(Massaro 2000a:78-9; Windley-Daoust 2001:52-5; McKenna 2002; Curran 2002; de Berri *et al* 2003; Himes (ed) 2005; Cornish 2009; Hug 2009a; Hart 2009)

## Appendix Two: Research ethics procedures and forms



**Massey University**  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Te Kura Pūkenga Tangata

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Private Bag 102 904  
North Shore Mail Centre  
Auckland 0745  
New Zealand  
[www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

Health Enquiries	Social Work/Policy Enquiries
T 64 9 441 8166	T 64 9 441 8164
F 64 9 441 8165	F 64 9 441 8165

Dear <name>

### **Ethics, public policy and justly sustainable outcomes**

I would like to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview related to my research for the degree of PhD in Public Policy. Using the Appreciative Inquiry method of interviewing, I am exploring the potential for New Zealand's public policy process to deliver greater social and environmental justice, if explicit principles of social morality were used to shape policy development.

I am applying the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to my inquiry. Among these guidelines for ethical social interaction, the principles of human dignity, social and economic justice, subsidiarity, the optimal role of government, personal responsibility, effective civic participation and environmental stewardship are particularly relevant for this project.

In the belief that meaningful, sustainable jobs and decent, affordable homes should be available to everyone in New Zealand, I am focusing on the employment and housing policy domains. Aspects of your current or former work suggest potential for your informed contribution to this research. I should, therefore, welcome your participation.

Anticipating your interest, I append a Research Information Sheet detailing the project purpose, content, processes and research ethics status. A Participant Consent Form is provided, for our discussion and your signature when we meet.

Shortly after you receive this letter, I will contact you to ascertain your availability for this piece of work and, if you agree, to arrange a time to meet. I will travel to any meeting place you specify. In the meantime, if you would like to discuss the project, I can be contacted on (09) 632 9484 (daytime), on (09) 416 7628 (evenings) or on email at [Brenda4@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Brenda4@xtra.co.nz).

Many thanks for considering this request. I look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely

**Brenda Radford**

PhD candidate, School of Social and Cultural Studies

Massey University – Albany Campus

### **Enclosures:**

Research Information Sheet; Participant Consent Form

## **RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET**

**for Government policy experts and advocates**

**Are We Doing Good?**

**An Appreciative Inquiry linking Catholic Social Teaching and the ethics of public policy outcomes in New Zealand**

(working title)

### **Researcher details**

My name is Brenda Radford and I am a PhD candidate at Massey University. I am building an in-depth policy understanding to complement my thirty years of government service in operational implementation aspects of social policy. My principal research supervisor is Associate Professor Michael O'Brien, of the School of Health and Social Services at the Albany Campus (Ph 09 441 8161). My co-supervisor is Rev Dr Neil Vaney. He is a Marist priest associated with the Good Shepherd Theological College and the Catholic Discipleship Centre in Auckland.

### **The research purpose**

My project considers the relative influence of social ethics and institutional pragmatism on the development and implementation of public policy in New Zealand. I wish to assess the potential for the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to contribute to policies that ensure justly sustainable outcomes. I am using current employment and housing policies to explore the proposition that social injustice and environmental irresponsibility can be overcome through applying morally sound policy, which actively pre-empts or mitigates unethical (and often inadvertent) impacts such as socio-economic marginalisation and ecological damage.

### **The social ethics framework for the research**

Catholic Social Teaching is based on developing and sustaining 'right relationships' among people and with the rest of creation. In the social and environmental contexts, the CST principles to be canvassed are human dignity; the importance of the family; the common good; solidarity; freedom, rights and reciprocal responsibilities; social justice and equality; the preferential option for the poor; respect for cultural autonomy and stewardship of the natural environment.

In the political and economic domains, the CST principles encompass economic justice; the universal destination of public and private goods; the dignity of work; subsidiarity and the proper role of government; effective civic participation; sustainable global development and peace.

## **Research methodology**

Using the world-view and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry, I am conducting two sets of key informant expert interviews. In the first set I wish to speak with Catholic Church leaders; representatives from Catholic social service agencies; advocates and educators in the Catholic system, to gain a sense of current CST practice and its potential for providing effective moral signposts for policy decision-making.

A second series of interviews seeks the views of senior public policy advisors; central government and local body politicians; strategic thinkers in the operational arms of government; and non-government organisations as community advocates in employment and housing policy and service delivery.

The discussions with **government policy and systems experts, politicians and community advocates** centre on the roles of employment and housing policy in the context of just sustainability. Views are sought as to the current effectiveness of policy processes in ensuring social and environmental justice; evidence of effectiveness; opportunities for systemic improvement; barriers to just sustainability; the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in the policy system; what guides public policy development at present; the influences on decision-making and where it is best located; the place of ethics in policy-making; levels of awareness of the principles of CST; and views as to the feasibility of using these principles in policy design, development, implementation and evaluation, to ensure just sustainability in outcomes.

Both sets of interviews seek the common ground and the divergences between the CST and public policy paradigms, to build on current best practice in terms of just sustainability and to identify new ethically-based policy criteria for application at the earliest stages of policy development.

## **Project procedures**

The interviews are semi-structured. They follow the Appreciative Inquiry format to ‘Discover what is,’ ‘Dream what might be,’ ‘Design what should be,’ identify the ‘Destiny’ or ‘What will be’ and indicate the parameters for ‘Delivery.’ Each conversation is recorded manually and should take approximately one hour.

As soon as possible following the interview, I will provide my notes for addition or amendment as you see fit. While editorial responsibility in the final thesis document is mine, checking the interview notes with you will strengthen the validation of the primary research data.

## **Attribution and confidentiality**

My preference is that interview data quoted in the final thesis be attributed to the research participant from whom it was obtained. I will naturally respect confidentiality where a participant prefers this approach. Because of the small number of interviewees in each group, and because of the high public profile of some participants, however, it may not be possible to guarantee anonymity. I will take the utmost care to avoid creating reputational risk for any participants.



## **Participants' rights**

There is no obligation to accept the invitation to participate in this research. You have the right to:

- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Decline to answer any particular question
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation and prior to submission of the thesis
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give me permission to quote you
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

If you have any questions about the project, you are welcome to contact me, on (027) 5756 006, or my principal supervisor Michael O'Brien on (09) 441 8161.

## **Informed consent**

At the beginning of the interview I will explain the University's procedure for Informed Consent and seek your agreement to its provisions as they affect this research project. Once signed by you, the Participant Consent Form records our agreement as to the interview scope and process; the right to decline to answer any of the questions; the method of recording and storing the primary data obtained from you; the agreed position regarding attribution and confidentiality; and the manner in which your material will be validated with you following the interview.

## **Massey University Ethics Statement**

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named below is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics and Equity), telephone (06) 350 5249; email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)

Brenda Radford

PhD candidate

School of Health and Social Services

Massey University – Albany Campus

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

### Are We Doing Good?

#### **An Appreciative Inquiry linking Catholic Social Teaching and the ethics of public policy outcomes in New Zealand** (working title)

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years.

I have read the Research Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

I understand that the nature of my work means that at least some of my input to the research may be recognisable to informed readers.

I understand that I have the right to decline to answer any question or to withdraw at any time from participation in the interview process.

I agree/do not agree to selected quotations from my interview comments being attributed to me, subject to validation by me.

I agree/ do not agree to be approached by the researcher in the event that my data may be considered for inclusion in subsequent papers written for publication.

I agree that the researcher has sole editing and interpretative rights and responsibilities regarding the selection and use of my primary data in the thesis document.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Research Information Sheet.

Signature ..... Date .....

Full name (printed) .....



# Massey University

17 May 2006

Brenda Radford  
211 Hobsonville Road  
West Harbour  
AUCKLAND

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT  
TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR  
(ETHICS & EQUITY)  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
T 64 6 350 5573  
F 64 6 350 5622  
humanethics@massey.ac.nz  
www.massey.ac.nz

Dear Brenda

**Re: Potential for Catholic Social Teaching to Influence Public Policy**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 17 May 2006.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

*"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia V Rumball (Professor)  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and  
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity)

cc Assoc Prof Mike O'Brien  
School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany

Assoc Prof Peter Lineham, HoS  
School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany

## **Appendix Three: Research participants**

**Dr Blair Badcock**, Chief Advisor Housing Sector Policy, Housing New Zealand Corporation

**Most Rev Charles D Balvo**, Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand and the Pacific Islands

**Lisa Beech**, Research and Advocacy Officer, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

**Dr Mary Betz**, Auckland Regional Co-ordinator, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

**Sue Bradford**, Member of Parliament, Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand

**Rawiri Brell**, Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and Regional Education, Ministry of Education

**Janet Brown**, General Manager Service Delivery, Career Services

**Hon Chris Carter**, Minister of Housing, Conservation and Education in Labour-led coalition government (1999-2008), MP for Te Atatu

**Hon Judith Collins**, Minister of Police, Corrections and Veterans' Affairs in National-led coalition government (2008-2011), MP for Clevedon, former Opposition Spokesperson for Social Development

**Margaret Crozier**, Senior Strategy Analyst, Department of Labour

**Megan Courtney**, Partnership Advisor, Waitakere City Council

**Rev Dr Neil Darragh**, Principal, Catholic Institute of Theology, The University of Auckland and Parish Priest, Glen Innes

**Rev Terry Dibble**, Catholic priest in a special social ministry

**Brian Donnelly**, Executive Director, New Zealand Housing Foundation

**Sister Mary Foy rsm**, Chairperson of Monte Cecilia Housing Trust and Manager, Te Ukaipo Mercy Initiatives for Rangatahi

**Jan Francis**, Executive Officer, Mayors Taskforce for Jobs

**Lyndsay Freer**, Media consultant for the Society of Mary and former National Director, Catholic Communications Office

**Hon Mark Gosche**, Minister of Housing, Transport and Pacific Island Affairs in Labour-led coalition government (1999-2005), former MP for Maungakiekie

**Alan Johnson**, Senior Policy Analyst, Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, Salvation Army

**Mary Kayes**, Regional Manager, Career Services

**Rt Hon John Key**, Prime Minister in National-led coalition government (2008-2011), former Leader of the Opposition, MP for Helensville

**Pauline Kingi CNZM**, Regional Director, Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Maori Development

**Rose Leonard**, Senior Advisor Strategic Governance, Waitakere City Council

**Elaine Lolesio**, Housing Manager, Monte Cecilia Housing Trust

**Brother Patrick Lynch**, Chief Executive Officer, New Zealand Catholic Education Office

**Ann Magee**, Executive Manager, Chief Executive's Office, Auckland Regional Council

**Tony Mayow**, Chairman of Community Waitakere, President of NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations

**Linda McQuade**, Vicar for Education, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

**Greg Mossong**, Principal Advisor Investment and Development, Ministry of Transport, formerly Principal Advisor in Auckland Policy Team, Housing New Zealand Corporation

**Madhavan Raman**, Regional Manager, Housing New Zealand Corporation

**Wendy Reid**, Consultant, Intrinsic Ltd and former public servant

**Suzanne Sinclair**, Relationship Manager, Department of Internal Affairs

**Ruth Smithies (Drs)**, Theologian, former Social Policy Assistant to Cardinal Thomas Williams, Doctorandus of Theology 1972, University of Amsterdam

**Hon Judith Tizard**, Minister for Auckland Issues, Associate Minister for Transport, Arts Culture and Heritage in Labour-led coalition government (1999-2008), MP for Auckland Central

**David Tutty**, Justice and Peace worker, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

**Denise Wiki**, Community Relationship Manager, Housing New Zealand Corporation

**Social policy colleague** who requested anonymity

**Social services management colleague** who requested anonymity

## **Appendix Four: Research interview questions**

### **1. The Appreciative Inquiry framework (Chapters 11-12)**

#### **Discover what is**

The sources of energy and drive in the public policy system?  
Where are the successes and opportunities in housing policy?  
Where are the successes and opportunities in employment policy?  
To what extent do ethics feature in policy development now?  
What about the locations and impacts of power in the policy system?  
What works really well - 'the best' - in public policy and services?  
Opportunities for change in policy or service delivery?  
Current contributions of CST in the policy environment?

#### **Dream what might be**

What would you like to see more of in the policy-making process?  
Moral and ethical perspectives in policy- what really matters?  
Envisioning the best housing policy outcomes  
Envisioning the best employment policy outcomes  
How might a social consensus on ethics in public policy be achieved?  
How might we reduce the incidence of homelessness?  
How might we reduce the incidence of unemployment?  
Might just sustainability ever be fully achieved in New Zealand?  
What contribution might CST make to achievement of just sustainability?

#### **Design what should be**

What needs to change in housing policy – why and how?  
What needs to change in employment policy – why and how?  
What is government's role in ensuring just sustainability?  
Where are strategic decisions best made, by whom and why?  
Who should be involved and consulted in policy-making?  
Should impact evaluation be used at the start of major policy developments?

#### **Destiny – what will be if change occurs**

What will ethical housing policies look like?  
What will ethical employment policies look like?  
Relationships between these outcomes and the CST principles  
How will these outcomes differ from current outcomes?  
Suggest some policy objectives to foster just sustainability

## **Delivery – what will make a positive difference?**

Who is responsible for bringing about change?

What about implementation strategies and action plans?

What commitments to change exist and who has made them?

The elements of a vision for a justly sustainable New Zealand

## **2. Housing questions by AI category (Chapter 15.1)**

### **Discover what is**

Nature and purpose of your role and its relationship to housing policy

To what extent does housing policy impact your work?

Does it help or hinder your work and how?

What level of demand is there for your housing services?

To what extent are you able to meet the demand for your work?

What do you find works really well in housing policy?

Are current housing goals optimal? How well are they working and for whom?

What doesn't work so well and shows scope for improvement?

How receptive is government to your advocacy and suggestions?

Are there impediments to achievement of good housing outcomes for everyone?

Is there social injustice in NZ re access to decent housing?

What causes homelessness in relatively wealthy NZ and why?

What are the causes and social impacts of the decline in home ownership in NZ?

What impacts does Cabinet prioritise when making housing policy decisions?

Comment on the extent to which people working in the policy system demonstrate a sense of moral accountability for the impacts of their work on communities and families?

### **Dream what might be**

Are government's current outcomes for housing policy the best they could be?

Are there other outcomes you would like to see addressed?

What would you like to see more of in housing service delivery?

What ethical principles drive government's housing policies and services?

Could a greater sense of ethics be injected into the public policy system? How?

Who would need to be convinced of the value of doing this, if so?

How would an explicit ethics-based policy approach affect your work and clients?

Could the CST principles help in assessing housing policy options?

Is the elimination of homelessness a realistic policy goal? How might it be achieved, if so?

Opportunities for housing partnerships between government and the third sector?

How might all housing needs in NZ be met justly and sustainably?

### **Design what should be**

How should housing be made affordable for everyone, especially low-income families?

What is traded off through the AS taking half of Vote: housing?

Is there a just balance of housing roles between government and other providers?

What should government be responsible for in housing supply and affordability?

Who else has responsibilities, or should have them? In what areas?

Who should be responsible and for what regarding homelessness?

What support should government give to NGOs dealing with homeless people?

Are housing policy decisions made in the best places to facilitate just outcomes?

Are policy people close enough to housing needs to be able to assess fully the relationship between policy choices and their consequences?

What input do you have into housing policy design and resource allocation?

How effective are government's housing consultation processes?

How much scope is there for local community input to social housing allocation?

What is the proper balance between personal responsibility for housing outcomes and government provision of housing assistance?

Should government act to reverse declining home ownership in NZ? Why or why not?

If government should act to increase the home ownership level, what should it do?

Should government have a greater or lesser role in direct housing supply?

Should government have a statutory role to ensure everyone is housed adequately?

What is needed in housing development to mitigate damaging effects on the ecosystem?

Is government's housing role sufficiently resourced? What's missing, if not?

If you could change 2-3 aspects of housing policy, what would they be?



### **Destiny – what will be if systemic change occurs**

What significant housing policy options have been proposed and by whom?

Are suggestions from the third sector for large-scale change to housing policy, services and governance likely to be acted upon?

Is the NZ Housing Strategy 2005 still current? Being operationalised? Changing at all?

Do New Zealanders trust government with regard to housing policy? Should they?

### **Delivery – what will make a difference?**

Do we have enough houses in NZ? Comment on issues for future supply

Is housing used as an economic stimulant e.g. for construction job creation?

What is the policy relationship between housing, labour markets and regional development?

How responsive is housing policy to the integration of all four dimensions of sustainability?

Please describe the characteristics of a justly sustainable housing policy

If an explicit ethics-based approach were taken to housing policy and its implementation, what differences in housing outcomes would you and your clients see?

Your aspirations for just sustainability in housing policy for the future

## **3. Employment questions by AI category (Chapter 15.2)**

### **Discover what is**

Please outline your employment-related role and link it to labour market policy, employment policy and job-seeker assistance.

Please describe how your experiences in employment policy relate to the labour market opportunities and socio-economic outcomes of low-income families.

What does social justice mean to you? What relationship does your work have to social justice? Is there social injustice in NZ in employment? If so, could you give examples?

Do the economic, employment and labour market policies help you or hinder you in your work. Why is this so?

In this wealthy country, why are some people unemployed? Are there systemic causes of this? What other reasons are there for it?

Have you encountered the term 'structural unemployment?' Does this term feature in policy debate these days? If so, how and what does it mean? If not, what caused it to disappear?

What policies and services does government have to help young people at risk into training and employment? Is government resourcing well-targeted and adequate for this purpose? Who has input into the design and implementation of these policies and services?

### **Dream what might be**

What works really well in labour market policy, employment policy and job-seeker assistance at present? How do you know this?

What does not work well in these policy areas at present? What improvements are needed and why? Are there unmet needs? If so, what is the evidence for this?

What are government's current outcomes for employment policy? Are they optimal or could other aspects be usefully included?

What does NZ need more of, in employment policy and services? What outcomes might be achieved if all its elements worked well all the time?

What do the clients of the employment assistance programmes think of them? How do you know this?

Which aspects of employment service delivery are particularly helpful to welfare beneficiaries? What would they like more of?

What would you like government to do, or provide, to make your own work more effective in terms of just sustainability in the area of employment?

How might central and local government best support local businesses to create sustainable employment opportunities?

How might employment policy be shaped to move towards just sustainability in the relationship between economic growth, job creation and environmental protection?

### **Design what should be**

What should drive employment policy? How should the ethics of client outcomes and impacts influence political responsiveness, pragmatism and expediency? Where does just sustainability fit in?

What is your view on full employment as a policy goal? Should government act to protect people's access to jobs in times of economic downturn? If not, why not? If so, how should it do this?

How could everyone who wants a job be able to have one? What are the respective responsibilities of central government, local government, businesses and the third sector?

Which aspects of economic policy would need to be changed if government were to move actively towards a policy of full employment?

What kinds of programmes, designed and delivered by whom, are needed to bring marginalised groups into the workforce? What ethical principles should drive their design and implementation?

What should government's role be with regard to community-led economic development, stimulation of local labour market demand, local job creation and support for regional development?

What key changes would you make to labour market policy and employment policy if you had the opportunity to bring about change?

### **Destiny – what will be if systemic change occurs**

How would employment policy-making based on human dignity, authentic development and social justice differ from the policy development processes we have at present?

What level of receptivity is there among employment policy actors to the use of CST or similar ethical principles in the design of policy approaches and job-seeker services? How do you know this?

Who would need to be convinced of the value of being explicit at the outset about the ethics of employment policy development? What would convince them?

What kinds of systemic and process changes are needed to embed a focus on the ethics of policy outcomes in the development of employment policy and services?

### **Delivery – what will make a difference?**

If CST principles were used to guide employment policy, what would be different about the policy development processes and the implementation tools used?

What would define success for an employment policy based on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and what would its outcomes be?

What are your aspirations for a justly sustainable NZ? How will economic policy, labour market policy and employment policy contribute to this?

## **4. Governance and decision-making questions (Chapter 16.1)**

### **Discover what is**

Do our policy-making processes have an ethical dimension?

Do New Zealanders trust government? Why or why not?

How well does the public service convention of 'free, frank and fearless' advice to government work in practice? What informs your thinking about this?

Are there any constraints on policy advisers giving '3F' advice to government? If so, what are they? What would alleviate them?

What drives political decision-making and who do the politicians really listen to?

Whose ethics, values and assumptions drive social policy development?

What ethical principles influence policy-making?

What evidence is there, if any, that government has an ethical consensus on its strategic goals?

What consideration is given to the ethics of policy consequences or outcomes as policy is developed, in areas such as housing and employment?

Where and how do social justice and environmental justice feature in policy debates about sustainability in Auckland?

What is the core aim of the policies developed by your political party?

To what extent do your party's policy-makers consider the impacts of various policy options as you decide on particular positions to adopt?

What kinds of impacts are important in your policy decision-making?

What informs the ethical positions your Cabinet/Caucus agrees upon?

As a Cabinet Minister, what are your most effective sources of advice and information within the policy system and from other avenues?

How is local information from your electorate constituents fed into the policy-making process?

What safeguards are there in the policy system to promote just sustainability in policy outcomes? Do they work? How do we know?

You have some high-profile colleagues who are Catholic. Does their knowledge of the CST principles contribute to policy debate within your party?

To what extent is the CST view helpful in assessing policy options?

To what extent do ethical considerations such as equality of opportunity and avoidance of environmental damage influence your policy debates on housing and employment?

### **Dream what might be**

What areas of housing and employment policy work well? What could do with improvement and why?

In your work, how do you create opportunities for discussing what is good for society and for the environment?

What processes do you use for encouraging thinking about ethics, and with whom?

What would you like to see more of in the policy system, its processes and its outcomes? Why?

Are you familiar with the principles of CST or similar faith-based frameworks? Where have you heard about them?

To what extent could the CST principles be helpful in developing the social policy positions of government?

Do you believe the market economy is conducive to just sustainability? How might justice best be safeguarded in a free market?

What safeguards are there in the policy system to ensure just sustainability in its outcomes?

Bearing in mind the long-standing NZ conventions about the separation of church and state, how would you assess the feasibility of using CST as a reference framework for developing policy that is conducive to justly sustainable outcomes?

In what parts of the policy system might we modify the policy/service process to increase the likelihood of justly sustainable outcomes?

### **Design what should be**

What steps should government take to implement a justly sustainable balance between economic growth and environmental protection?

Does government social policy have the balance right between what is provided from public resources and what people themselves are responsible for?

Does government assume roles, responsibilities and tasks that should be done by local organisations?

Where should key decisions be made about housing policy and programme resource allocation and distribution?

Where should key decisions be made about employment policy and job-seeker assistance programme resource allocation and distribution?

Do you think the decisions about social policy programme design and resourcing are made in the right places to ensure just outcomes locally?

Is power used responsibly in public policy-making? What are the indicators of government effectiveness in the use of its power?

Should there be more local decision-making in public resource allocation?

What potential is there for devolution of government programme funding, to whom and with what implications?

What capacity is there in our communities for exercising responsibility for public funds and programmes?

If you could change the way government makes policy, to make its outcomes more just, what would you change, to what ends, and how would you go about it?

What is the optimum role for government in working towards just sustainability? Who else has a role and what kinds of contributions can they make?

### **Destiny – what will be if systemic change occurs**

How can a workable consensus be sought, and with whom, on the ethics and values shaping our policy processes and decisions?

To what extent are evaluation, social impact analysis and environmental impact analysis used in policy decision-making?

How are the insights from evaluation used in subsequent policies?

Are there any major impediments to the use of CST or similar ethical principles as signposts to guide the processes of policy development?

If so, how could such impediments be overcome?

How would the use of CST add ethical value to the policy outcomes?

How and where in the policy system would a focus on ethical principles and impacts most effectively be promoted?

How receptive are our key policy actors likely to be to the idea of using a framework based on ethics and social morality for policy design and service delivery?

### **Delivery – what will make a positive difference?**

If the principles of CST were applied to policy development and programme or service implementation, what would change in the policy tools used and outcomes achieved?

How would housing policy and job-seeker assistance programmes be changed if the ethics of policy outcomes were given greater emphasis in the policy system?

If we applied moral principles such as CST at the start of the policy process and during all its stages, would this alleviate the structural causes of injustice?

What are your goals for a justly sustainable society? What will its main characteristics be?

What will we as a society need to do in order to achieve just sustainability?

What will our communities see that is different, if just sustainability in social policy outcomes is eventually achieved?

## **5. Policy implementation and service delivery questions (Chapter 16.2)**

### **Discover – what is**

What is happening that is positive in the strategic policy-making arena? What is there that can be built on, to effect positive change?

How well does the policy process meet your needs as a minister?

Among government officials from whom you receive policy advice, do you get a sense of moral accountability for what they recommend to government, and then implement? How is this evident?

Are you aware of effective instances of consultation, empowerment and/or devolution of power and resources from government to local organisations and communities?

What opportunities for policy input and influence do you have in your present role and how do you go about doing this?

What currently works well in government processes from a social and environmental justice perspective?

What does not work so well in terms of social and environmental justice, and why?

Does anyone consider long-range policy effects (social, environmental or economic) on already-disadvantaged individuals or groups, or on future generations?

What evidence is there of policy impact assessment, especially at the early stages of policy development, well before implementation?

Why, after years of targeted programmes, do we still have achievement gaps in society?

### **Dream – what might be**

What works really well in the implementation of government policy to support just sustainability?

What could government do to make the social impacts of its policies more just, and the environmental impacts of its economic policies more sustainable?

Please indicate a few instances of social injustice and environmental injustice, to which you would like to see the government pay more attention

What do we need more of in the policy and service delivery systems?

What would help policies and services work more effectively for clients?

How do you challenge what is unjust in the public policy environment, or in the way that government services are delivered, and to what effect?

Why are some groups still lagging behind the community as a whole in terms of achievement and ability to participate fully in society?

Could policy tools be used more effectively to create equal opportunities?

How could long-range thinking about potential impacts of policies best be factored into the policy development process?

How might social justice be safeguarded in a free market economy?

What are your aspirations for a justly sustainable New Zealand? How might we get there and what would it look like once achieved?

## **Design – what should be**

What should we be doing differently in policy needs analysis and development, to reduce, if not eliminate, achievement gaps in society?

What level of influence should frontline government agency staff have on new policy or programme design, development and implementation?

To what extent are social impact analysis and evaluation used before, during and after public policy design and implementation?

Could social impact analysis and similar evaluative tools be used to integrate the CST principles into public policy thinking?

Is there evidence of organisational learning from impact analysis or evaluation?

If you could change two or three aspects of the policy system in the interests of just sustainability, what would you change? How would you do it and what would you expect to see that was different or better as a result?

In your work, how do you balance the need for speedy advice and decisions with the need for high-quality and equitable policy outcomes?

What effect does the speed of policy development have on its quality, its ethics and the likelihood of its successful implementation?

How can policy analysts counter negative impacts of speed caused by political pressure, real or imagined emergencies, rapid response demands and the like?

## **Destiny – what will be if systemic change occurs**

Should the values, aspirations and contributions of powerless people be given a stronger voice in policy-making, service design and implementation?

If not, why not? If so, how might this be achieved?

## **Delivery – what will make a difference**

What would the defining characteristics of New Zealand society be if it were just, sustainable and cohesive?

What would we see that was different from the current situation?

What does government need to do as its contribution to the achievement of this?



## **Appendix Five: Fieldwork findings and implications**

### **1. Suggestions from participants for systems improvements**

- Make best use of existing policy tools to ensure justly sustainable outcomes. Priority for just sustainability will come from penetrating analysis, reflection time and policy-making expertise.
- Rationalise and prioritise departmental budgets, programmes and services for comparative impact in terms of just sustainability.
- Stick to core programmes rather than delving into small inefficient sidelines.
- Government should deal explicitly with poverty, building on commitments of public servants to ‘do good’ for their clients.
- The policy environment should be notable for ‘free, frank and fearless’ confident recommendations to ministers, with role clarity, resources and action plans.
- Policy design should include safeguards against adverse impacts and negative externalities.
- Central agencies (SSC, DPMC, NZT) should work with universities to introduce dynamic new thinking and approaches into policy analysts’ training – aiming for strategic, flexible, visionary thinking, not instrumental, bureaucratic approaches.
- Government needs new governance structures for more effective subsidiarity.
- It would be worthwhile to develop inter-sectoral accountabilities and budgets for CEOs on the assumption that performance evidence will bring a greater focus in national offices on cross-cutting work.
- Summarising several comments – we need to understand how large the persuasion task is to get people comfortably ensconced within a system to think and act differently.

### **2. Comments on the current profile and influence of Catholic Social Teaching and how its principles might permeate the policy system**

- There is a need to manage official/ institutional views on the significance of the constitutional separation between the church and state – does such separation really matter when the CST ideas are valid anyway?
- There is reasonable open-mindedness to the CST principles themselves, with nothing anyone could really object to, except maybe the ‘social mortgage’ idea.
- There is enough systemic awareness of CST, especially among politicians, to build on when proposing a new approach to policy-making.
- We can capitalise on the sense that politicians are more receptive to the CST principles than public servants are, because they encounter them in well-presented Select Committee submissions from Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand.
- CST is listened to by politicians, but with no guarantee it will be acted upon.
- CST might be more palatable to policy analysts if its principles were borrowed from the Catholic context and placed in a more generic social morality frame.
- CST is sometimes considered too vague to be practical, so it should be applied with clear-cut simplicity that becomes compelling and persuasive, so that it stands as an ethical filter at the stages of policy needs assessment, options analysis, policy development, implementation and evaluation.

- In using CST, make explicit links between CST principles and just sustainability, grounding both these concepts in housing, employment, governance and service delivery applications.
- There is a need to increase systemic knowledge of how CST principles can be applied to policy analysis and service delivery, to clarify the ethics of particular policy proposals or service practices.
- There need to be practical middle axioms to link the principles with local realities.
- Policy analysts need time to do the complex thinking that CST application to policy proposals would entail [this would be true of any set of ethical principles]. The lack of thinking time is a major obstacle to high quality policy-making.
- The best way to assess how helpful CST would be to the achievement of just sustainability through policy-making is to develop tools and try it out – perhaps in an Appreciative Inquiry focused on hope and opportunity.

### **3. Ideas for ethics-based thinking about policy frameworks and tools**

#### ***For strategy***

- New ethical approaches are needed, to counter the neutral, value-free, economics-based approaches which have devalued our traditional ethical imperatives.
- Identification of the best possible outcomes from policies and services will come from a thorough early analysis of needs – with no shortcuts.
- Policy developers should analyse and factor in long-range consequences as well as short term gains.
- Early analysis will identify elements of cultural diversity so that policies, services and programmes can be more adaptable and responsive.

#### ***For governance***

- We need to re-think the governance assumptions that produced managerialism at the expense of strategic innovation; extreme risk aversion rather than sensible risk management; and centralised control rather than effective links into local offices, third sector providers and community groups.
- Policy analysts and their managers need to break out of a destructive ‘fear factor’ mode of just giving government what they think it wants to hear.
- Government agencies need to recruit strategic thinkers and learn how to use them effectively, without fear of what they might come up with. Be prepared for a few mistakes and learn from them. Be prepared to train strategic thinkers as policy analysts, rather than relying so heavily on recent university graduates, who have the analytical techniques but not the life experience to develop social policy.
- Policy analysts need to ‘get out more’ – into local offices and communities, to increase their understanding of social issues, their causes, their effects and the needs of clients. Local project participation and mutual job secondments with local operational staff might facilitate this.
- Political pressure is always taken to mean insufficient time for detailed analysis and deep reflection about policy consequences. It is imperative that policy analysts think ahead, anticipate government requirements, plan for contingencies and analyse issues comprehensively before making recommendations.

- It is unethical to develop and implement policy ‘on the run’ when dealing with deep-seated issues involving people and the environment.
- There is a pervasive ‘silo mentality’ in national offices, caused by competitiveness for baseline appropriations. This makes it difficult to gain organisational support and resourcing for regional and local inter-sectoral work and this needs to change.
- National offices should trust the advice coming from local and regional offices.
- Local public servants seem unsure whether the senior echelons of the public service would be prepared to tackle the front-end of policy-making differently.

### ***For services and community engagement***

- Clients are often scared of big government agencies because of an institutional ‘feel’ and due to perceived official judgmentalism about the circumstances that have caused them to need assistance.
- Public servants need to be clear about where each aspect of their work should lie in the continuum of interaction with clients and the community at large – whether each task concerns information, liaison, consultation, involvement, partnership, capacity-building, resourcing or devolution – and then act justly.
- We all need to consider how best to obtain public agreement on needs, priorities, expectations and values – and whose input should be sought.
- Government should initiate and resource public meetings for input to housing and employment policy-making.
- Government agencies should demonstrate receptivity to innovation from external sources and not dismiss people outright or wear them out through inaction.

### ***For housing policy and services***

- Government should manage the economy to get better ratios between house prices, rental costs and average wages.
- We should build enough state houses to eliminate the urgent waiting list.
- There is a need to improve the system for ensuring that state tenants who are no longer needy can move on and free up the house for another family.
- The housing programmes should be rationalised, with government delivering on the core programmes while developing partnerships with the third sector to experiment with new models, access commercial funding and share risk.
- The poverty traps in the IRR, AS and welfare benefit system should be removed because they discourage people from earning more and achieving independence.
- We need to scrutinise the AS closely – whether it is really the best way to use half of Vote: Housing. A review would be a huge job but one which is necessary considering the size the AS has become.
- We should explore a variety of ‘stepping stones’ housing tenure models and deposit gap assistance.
- Capitalisation of AS entitlements could be explored, similar to the former Family Benefit capitalisation.
- Government should increase its involvement in first home mortgages for low- to moderate-income families. To emphasise the ‘starter’ focus of this, and recycle limited funds among qualifying families, eligibility criteria could specify first homes only, a maximum house value, no mortgage transferability, no refinancing or home improvements, a firm income cut-off point and possibly a maximum loan

term of 10 years. After that time, people often want to upgrade and they can do that with a bank once they have established some equity and a repayment record.

- There should be limitations on state housing tenure, in the interests of fairness and best use of a very limited resource. Limited, fixed-term tenancies and periodical tenure reviews would implant a message that the houses were provided to address current need, and should be relinquished once the need has passed.

### ***For employment policy and services***

- Government should stop ‘fudging’ the employment statistics by including every fragment of work as ‘being employed.’
- There should be stringent targeting of resources to up-skill the workforce, through spelling out the benefits of each programme in terms of just sustainability. A ‘start/stop/continue’ analysis of each programme would be useful, to reduce fragmentation and strengthen the resourcing for the most effective programmes.
- Government should initiate sustainable job creation strategies in conjunction with local economic development. Seed funding and wage subsidies could complement joint initiatives, in partnership with local businesses.
- Keynesian interventionist economic models appear most suitable for creating and preserving jobs during times of economic downturn.

### ***For new tools development***

- Policy-makers should identify honestly all the barriers to just sustainability, through needs assessments, environmental scans and organisational inquiry and development projects, such as those which are possible using Appreciative Inquiry.
- There is an opportunity to create analysis, evaluation and training tools for all stages of the policy cycle, based on the principles of CST and the methods of AI.
- We should use front-end evaluation more often, in fact for all new policies, making ethics-based *ex ante* evaluation part of the policy-making way of life.

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